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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE NURSING DEGREE: POST-BASIC STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF ITS COSTS AND BENEFITS

BY

CHRISTINE A. ATEAH

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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IN

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THE NURSING DEGREE: POST-BASIC STUDENTS PERCEPTIONS OF ITS COSTS AND BENEFITS

submitted by Christine A. Ateah in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Sociology of Education.

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(Supervisor)

G.D. Taylor

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Janette Berman

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Date: October 9, 1987

DEDICATION

To my husband Curwood, for always being so supportive, encouraging, and willing to take on the extra responsibilities to allow me to pursue this goal.

To my daughter Jaymie, whose antics kept me smiling and who helped to keep everything in perspective.

ABSTRACT

Many registered nurses (R.N.s) are attending post-R.N. university programs to obtain a degree in nursing. Although nurses entering the profession in the year 2000 and beyond may be required to have a nursing degree, those who are diploma graduates working as R.N.s at that time will be allowed to continue to do so. Despite the costs and in anticipation of the benefits, the numbers of these post-R.N. students are increasing. The perceived costs and benefits experienced by a sample of these students are the focus of this research.

Choice and Exchange Theory has been used as a framework for examining the experiences of these students. The general premise of this theory is that humans participate in events that provide the most rewards and the least costs in order to maximize their profits. Each person makes decisions based on her/his perception of these rewards and costs.

The subjects of this study were students in the Post-R.N. B.Sc.N. program at the University of Alberta. These students completed a questionnaire designed to ascertain their perception of the types of costs and benefits of engaging in the Post-R.N. degree program. Generally, the costs and benefits that they perceived were found to be very similar to those revealed by previous studies of employed women, mature students and other post-R.N. students. This study also found that demographic and personal characteristics affected the experiences of the students and their interpretations of costs and benefits. In particular, those who felt they were experiencing high costs were also experiencing high benefits.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In 1974 the Canadian Nurses' Association established the year 2000 as the target date for the baccalaureate degree in nursing to be the minimum educational requirement for entry into the nursing profession. This means that from that date all nursing education institutions will be of a degree-granting nature. Because of this overall direction in the nursing profession, nurses currently holding a degree may be perceived as having the preferred credential for nursing practice. Consequently, nurses who hold a diploma may also have an interest in earning a degree, even though they will not need one to continue practicing as a registered nurse (R.N.) after the target date has been reached. That there is this interest among diploma nurses is apparent in the fact that many have enrolled in nursing degree programs. Indeed, in Canada their numbers have increased from 1,966 in 1975 to 3,591 in 1983 (C.N.A., 1987, p. 18-19).

Given that there are a substantial number of diploma graduate nurses returning to university to complete degree requirements, many questions arise about their experience with university education, and the motivations which bring these mature adults back to the status of student. Studies of women working outside the home, mature aged university students, and R.N.'s returning to university study indicate that such students have both positive and negative experiences and that there are both rewards and costs attached to these experiences. Employing Choice and Exchange Theory as a conceptual framework for investigating such costs and benefits, this thesis focuses on the experiences of a group of students registered in the Post-R.N. Bachelor of

Science in Nursing program at the University of Alberta during the 1986-1987 academic term.

Theoretical Framework

Nye (l980), in his presentation of Choice and Exchange Theory applied to the family, indicates that decisions result from the choices available. More specifically, the reasons why certain choices are made are based on their perceived benefit. The general premise of this theory is that people make choices that bring the most rewards and incur the least costs. In this sense, decisions are made to 'maximize profits' or, in other words, so that the benefits outweigh the costs.

The key concepts of Choice and Exchange Theory are rewards, costs, and profit. Rewards are defined as any physical or psychological pleasures or satisfactions, including any status, interaction, or relationship that provide gratification to the individual. Costs are defined as, "...any status, relationship, interaction, milieu, or feeling disliked by an individual" (Nye, 1980, p. 2). Therefore, rewards foregone can also be considered costs. Profit is presented by Nye in relation to rewards and costs. That is, a profitable outcome is one that provides the most rewards in relation to costs.

The theory of choice and exchange will be applied to various types of benefits and costs of returning to school that might be anticipated by the students selected for this study. Analysis will focus on the relationship between perceived costs and benefits, including the student's own perception of whether or not benefits outweigh costs associated with engaging in the degree program.

The operationalization of costs and benefits for post-R.N. students in relation to the baccalaureate nursing program in question will be derived from previous studies of employed women and mature aged students in post-secondary institutions, and also from other studies of post-R.N. students. The

categories of costs and benefits utilized for presentation and discussion include the following: professional advancement (e.g., promotions); professional knowledge (e.g., nursing theory); social relations (e.g., time away from family and friends); acquisition of credentials (e.g., belief that all nurses should have a degree); compliance with authority (e.g., degree required at place of employment); personal well-being (e.g., exhaustion, self-esteem); social status (e.g., recognition from others); financial aspects (e.g., the cost of attending university); and future working conditions (e.g., no shift work).

Research Questions

The following research questions will be addressed in the study:

1. What are the perceived costs and benefits (rewards) for students in the Post-R.N. study group?
2. How do the costs and benefits perceived by these students compare to those identified in other research?
3. Do certain demographic/personal characteristics (e.g., age, marital status, home responsibilities) affect the identification of specific costs and benefits?
4. Do these students view the program as being (potentially) profitable?

The independent variables are the situational and demographic characteristics of the students. To the extent that there are differences in perceptions of costs and benefits based on these personal characteristics, the independent variables will be taken as tentatively explaining these differences. The dependent variables then, are the costs and benefits of attending a post-R.N. program as perceived by the students, based on the findings in the literature.

Methodology and Limitations of the Study

The study population consists of 239 students enrolled in the first or second year of the the Post-R.N. Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program at the

University of Alberta, as of Sepember 25, 1986. These students have all previously earned their diploma in nursing from a non-university post-secondary institution. Of these, 194 were full-time and 45 were part-time (Faculty of Nursing Post R.N. office, University of Alberta, January, 1987).

The instrument used to obtain the data for this study is a self-report questionnaire which was administered to all students comprising the sample. Permission to conduct the study was granted by the Faculty of Nursing's Ethics and Research Committee .

The study is essentially a descriptive one, in that the data presented pertain primarily to students' perceptions of costs and benefits associated with the degree program. Given the nature of the sample (i.e., a non-probability sample) and the measurement of attitudes, certain limitations must be acknowledged. Any trends found in the data pertain only to the sample under investigation. And, since attitudes are not static qualities, one cannot be sure that the same results would be obtained at another time. It is also for this reason that test/retest reliability assessments may not be accurate when measuring attitudes, feelings, etc. (Polit and Hungler, 1983).

Organization of Chapters

Chapter Two presents the theoretical framework and a discussion of the literature reviewed. Choice and Exchange Theory is presented and explained in terms of its basic concepts, general sources of costs and rewards, and assumptions. The relevance of this theory to the literature reviewed and to this research will be clarified. The review of the literature focuses specifically on the costs and benefits that are incurred by employed women, mature students, and post-R.N. students who enroll in a nursing degree program.

In Chapter Three the research methods utilized in this study are outlined. The sample, survey instrument, and data collection techniques are described. As well, the operationalization of the variables is explained.

The data are presented in Chapter Four and discussed in relation to the costs and benefits, the research questions, the theoretical framework, and the literature reviewed.

In Chaper Five the data are further discussed in relation to the research questions. Implications of the findings and recommendations for further research conclude this final chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter, the theoretical framework that served as a foundation for the formulation of the research questions will be presented in some detail, and the literature introduced in the first chapter will be described more extensively.

Theoretical Framework

The theory that serves as the basis for this examination of the benefits and costs of attending a post-R.N. nursing degree program is Choice and Exchange Theory. A theory can be viewed as a "general principle that can anticipate and make sense of a large and diverse range of events" (Nye, 1980, p. 1) and consists of a set of propositions. The general principle of this theory is that human beings participate in events that provide the most rewards, the least costs and maximum profit. In seeking rewards, sometimes costs are voluntarily accepted. Also, when costs are avoided, there will be some rewards foregone. Each person, however, will make decisions based on her/his perception of rewards and costs.

Origins. Choice and Exchange Theory developed from two separate theories. Exchange Theory (Social Exchange Theory) originated with Thibaut and Kelley (1959), Homans (1961) and Blau (1964). The theory was formulated for use with small groups and dyads, and, according to Blau, "... refers to voluntary actions of individuals that are motivated by the returns they are expected to bring and typically do in fact bring from others" (1964, p. 91). Social exchange entails actions that require unspecified future obligations. In this original form, the exchange aspect refers to what one receives in return for something given.

Choice Theory (rational choice approach), as discussed by Heath (1976), begins with the assumption that:

> ...men (sic) have given wants, goals, values, or 'utility functions.' It then assumes that these goals cannot all be equally realized. Men live in a world of scarcity and therefore must select between alternative courses of action. They will, it is assumed, do so rationally, selecting the course of action which is the most effective means to their goal (if, for example, they have a single goal) or selecting the course which leads to their most preferred goal (if they have many, equally attainable goals) (p. 3).

Nye explains that both theories seem to have usefulness and are based on the same concepts. He views Choice and Exchange Theory as a 'great advance' over Exchange Theory because both choice and exchange are involved in the decision-making process. Choice, however, is viewed by Nye as the most significant aspect of the theory since exchange (with individuals, organizations, or society as a whole) likely always involves choice whereas choice will not necessarily involve exchange. Thus, when Exchange Theory alone is utilized there are limitations to its applicability since it is concerned with actions motivated by the returns and/or future obligations from others. Attending a post-secondary program does involve some exchange, but not all returns expected are from others (e.g., increased self-esteem). Choice Theory, on the other hand, is concerned primarily with the rational selection of actions that will provide attainment of goals.

For the purposes of this research, then, Choice and Exchange Theory will be employed as a framework for examining the perceived costs and benefits (rewards) of attending a post-R.N. nursing degree program.

Concepts. The theoretical concepts identified and discussed by Nye are not all of equal importance in this research. In fact, only a few are of particular relevance, namely, rewards, costs and profit. Therefore, it is these concepts which will be discussed in the next few pages.

According to Thibaut and Kelley (1959), "By rewards, we refer to the pleasures, satisfactions, and gratifications the person enjoys" (p. 12). Nye elaborates by including all things (physical, social, and psychological) that would be chosen by an individual if there were no negative aspects (costs). To determine what individuals regard as rewards would entail observing behavior and questioning them about their likes and dislikes. By applying this concept to the research questions of this study, the students' perceptions of the benefits received by attending the program as well as the anticipated future benefits upon graduation can be determined. This is related to theories of motivation, as the anticipated benefits of attending the program and/or after graduation are the reasons students give for entering such a program. The terms rewards and benefits will be utilized synonymously in this study.

Costs are defined by Nye (1980) as "any status, relationship, interaction, milieu, or feeling disliked by an individual" (p. 2). He points out that his work represents a departure from Thibault and Kelley who looked at costs specifically in relation to deterring an activity . Nye explains how an activity can still take place, even though costs are incurred. He sees two types of costs: things or situations disliked and rewards foregone. Things disliked are situations where, for example, anxiety, fear, pain or other uncomfortable feelings are experienced. These situations would be avoided if there were a choice. However, it should be made clear that people may be willing to endure costly situations if they perceive that the outcome ultimately will be rewarding. Rewards foregone is another type of cost in that, for example, choosing one activity may preclude the possibility of another activity. Therefore, choosing one activity incurs the cost of missing out on alternative activities.

When discussing costs in relation to attending a university program, both types of costs are immediately apparent. Things disliked, such as anxiety over

exams and frustration regarding the amount of work are commonly experienced. Examples of rewards foregone include time away from friends and family, loss of income, and less time for oneself.

Nye utilizes the term profit, described as "goodness of outcome" by Thibault and Kelley. This concept refers to an outcome for which there is the best relationship of rewards to costs. The assumption is that individuals make decisions based on their assessment of what will give them the most favorable or "profitable" outcome. The student attends school, anticipating more rewards in relation to the costs that will be incurred. Thus, although frustrations and anxieties can be the expected costs of the experience, they are ultimately not seen to be as significant as either the expected knowledge to be gained or the increased opportunities for employment after graduation.

General sources of costs and rewards. Nye refers to some general sources of costs and rewards. These, as well as some specific examples related to this research, will be discussed. The first source of cost or reward is social approval and includes with it love, prestige and respect. Nye notes that social approval is indeed a generalized reward since people everywhere seek it. Particular actions and certain manners of dress are examples of ways people seek such approval. Similarly, the student may feel that attending university will bring this reward. Social disapproval can then be viewed as a cost.

Ambiguity is discussed in relation to how fear and anxiety about the unknown contribute to the inability to prepare for events that cannot be anticipated. Predictability may be of more value to some, whereas to others, a life that is predictable may lack excitement and interest. A student might, on the one hand, consider how she/he will be evaluated (exams and papers) as a fear and worry but on the other hand, enjoy the challenge that is anticipated.

That security is valued is evidenced by the fact that many people spend large amounts of money on various types of insurance, bargain for 'job security', prefer salaries over commission work, and the like. Thus, in a situation where security is a relevant consideration, it may be the important motivating factor or reward. Better job opportunites and possibly the financial benefits of obtaining a degree may be viewed as measures that offer more potential security than continuing the status quo.

Another important source of reward or cost is money. It is associated with most types of security, and has been termed 'a general reinforcer' (Nye, 1980). In deciding whether or not to accept a position of employment, many people regard salary as one of the most important factors. Hence, it is not uncommon for people to pursue a university education in order to obtain a better paying job with more opportunities for advancement. At the same time, attending university costs money and this financial cost must be balanced against the rewards.

Assumptions. Nye (1980) discusses several assumptions of Exchange Theory and Choice and Exchange Theory. Those relevant to the research problem are:

1. Humans are rational beings. Within the limitations of the information that they possess and their ability to predict the future, they make the choices that will bring the most profit (most rewards/fewest costs).

2. People must undergo costs in order to obtain rewards. All behavior is costly in that it requires expenditure of energy and preempts time that might otherwise produce other rewards.

3. Individuals vary in the value they place on specific objects, experiences, relationships, and positions. Within a given society, most individuals will agree whether something is a reward or cost but may assign it to different places in their hierarchy of values.

4. Humans realize that the alternatives they choose affect the rewards and costs of other members of groups to which they belong. Therefore, they can decline choices that would appear

> profitable to them in the immediate sense because they can anticipate that, if the course of action they pursue increases the costs/reduces the rewards to other group members, they will reduce the rewards/increase the costs to the individual taking the action (p.7).

An inference that can be drawn from assumptions three and four is that an individual's own situation and personal characteristics will affect his/her perceptions of the rewards and costs associated with a particular course of action.

Research Questions

The answer to a number of research questions based on Choice and Exchange Theory will be sought in this study of post-R.N. students. These research questions are:

1. What are the perceived costs and benefits (rewards) for students in the post-R.N. sample population?
2. How do the perceived costs and benefits of these students compare to those identified in the literature?
3. Do certain demographic/personal characteristics (e.g., age, marital status, home responsibilities) affect the identification of specific costs and benefits by these students?
4. Do these students view attending the program as being (potentially) profitable?

By researching how these students perceive their experiences in a post-R.N. degree program, it is anticipated that new insights will be obtained regarding the benefits and costs of attending such a program. These insights can be shared with potential students and with those educators who teach this particular type of student.

Literature Review

Women who attend school incur many of the same costs and benefits as women who are employed. For both groups, some motivations, some perceived benefits, and most family concerns are likely to be similar. For that reason, the literature pertaining to employed women will be reviewed. The literature on mature students, that is, students who are 21 years of age and over (according to the definition used by the University of Alberta), will also be reviewed. By virtue of the fact that the students in this study have previously obtained a nursing diploma (the length of time required for this after high school would be two or three years) and have often worked prior to returning to study, the mature age description will be accurate for virtually all of them. And given that the students in the study are almost all women, the focus will be primarily on mature students who are female. Occasionally research results on both males and females will be reported, since indications are that the benefits are the same or very similar, and the costs are at least equal if not greater for females. Also, literature which looks specifically at post-R.N. education will be discussed.

The costs and benefits identified in the literature reviewed will be organized under nine categories. Five of these categories are drawn from Boshier's Education Participation Scale (EPS). This scale is an instrument that was developed to determine reasons for participation in adult education (O'Connor, 1979), and consists of seven factors or education participation items. The five selected factors are: compliance with authority; improvement in social relations; professional advancement; professional knowledge; and acquisition of credentials. Four additional categories have been added, as both costs and benefits are the focus of this research, and Boshier discussed only motivational factors (positive aspects) for adult education participation. The

resulting categories which are used here to organize the literature reviewed on costs and benefits for post-R.N. students are: professional advancement; professional knowledge; social relations; acquisition of credentials; compliance with authority; personal well-being; social status; financial aspects; and improved working conditions.

Professional advancement. This category is comprised of the future benefits associated with obtaining a degree in nursing. Students enter a post-secondary program in anticipation of the opportunities to advance in their career. The literature indicates that this anticipation is a major motivating factor in returning to school.

Chapman (l986), in his in-depth interpretive study of eight married, mature age undergraduate students, discusses some of the positive aspects of attending university. He found that for the students in his study, returning to post-secondary education is related to the anticipation of long-term future benefits, including greater opportunites for career advancement. Similarly, Sewall, (1984) in a study of motivations of adult undergraduate students, found that when the students were forced to choose the most important reason for continuing their education, over half selected career oriented reasons, which included wanting to advance in present career and hoping to develop a new career.

Mishler (1983), in a study of 441 adult graduates and their perceptions of the benefits of their bachelor's degree, listed seven possible goals (with an additional category of 'other') from which the students were asked to identify (in retrospect) those that had applied to them at enrollment. They were asked first to rate each goal as very important, somewhat important, or not important. To develop a new career was identified by 54% as very important and 26% as

most important. To advance in their career was noted by 29% as very important and 12% as most important (p. 218).

A 1982 University of Ottawa study undertaken to determine interest in continuing education for nurses, indicated that courses that were of primary interest to the nurses were those that were perceived to potentially enhance career opportunities and professional capabilities. Lonberg (1984) also notes that one motivation of R.N.s returning to school is career enhancement. This is supported by Jackson's study where 195 students in the Post-R.N. degree program at the University of Victoria, British Columbia were asked about their reasons for returning for a degree. The desire to obtain a promotion was highly ranked.

Hart, Crawford and Hicks (1985) discuss their own experiences with a post-R.N. degree program. They note one nurse's explanation regarding motivation for getting a degree: "The competition for promotions is tough, and nursing administration tries hard to pick the best nurse for the job. I wanted to be that nurse" (p. 23). Also noted, were the broader career options open to degreed nurses. Zusy (1986) concurs, observing that nurses are motivated to go back to school for a B.S.N because of the "tight job market" and to "enhance their marketability" especially in light of the fact that the future new graduates may all have degrees. Hillsmith (1978) asked 119 full and part-time post-R.N. students why they felt they needed a nursing degree. Reasons given included; better job opportunities, promotions and to change jobs.

To enhance one's career then, is an important motivating factor for attending a post-secondary educational program. Hersom and Smith (1981) in a study of women in the Canadian labour force, note that there is more likelihood that increasing one's education will lead to changes in one's career

where education is important for the position, and this is most likely at the university level.

Professional knowledge. This category includes both positive and negative aspects of the learning experience itself, and the anticipated benefits from the knowledge gained by attending a post-R.N. program.

Jackson (1984) found that the major motivating factor for post-R.N. students enrolling in that university program was a desire to increase their knowledge of nursing. Jackson also noted that the desire to be more effective in their present position was a more common response from those post-R.N. students who were in teaching and administrative positions and not in the staff nurse category. Hart et al. (1985) point out, however, that many degree graduates may return to bedside nursing rather than take broader career options because there are no immediate alternatives available or because of a commitment to this type of nursing. These nurses are "vitally concerned with obtaining the knowledge and skills that will be useful in direct nursing care of the hospitalized ill, as well as in other areas of nursing" (p. 22).

Some of the educational benefits for the R.N. attending the degree program are delineated by Hart et al. (1985) include; community nursing, research, teaching, management of personnel, physical assessment skills, client teaching, theories of organizational behavior, and change theory. Most of these are related to the content of the program, content which would not usually be covered in a diploma program or at most, covered in less depth.

Hillsmith (1978) identifies professional competence as a motivating factor for nurses who attend a post-R.N. program. She questioned the respondents in her study as to whether or not attending the program had given them a broader, sounder base for nursing practice. Seventy-four percent indicated it had, noting such benefits as: acquiring a broader background, developing better patient

teaching and leadership skills, and being able to use ideas from class in the hospital setting. Two other benefits that have been identified include: increased confidence levels with the additional educational accomplishment (Chapman, 1986) and growth in professional competence (Lonborg, 1984).

Borst and Walker (1986), in a study of R.N.'s personal reactions to a locally based post-R.N. degree program also note that one of the benefits an R.N. might perceive from attending such a program is professonal growth. Nurses in this study stated that a degree helped them feel more qualified and increased their awareness of the need for growth and change in nursing.

Balough (1980) discusses the experiences of 12 R.N. students who return to school for their degree in nursing. Two of the benefits presented by these students were: self confidence in ability to function as professional nurses and improved communication skills. This was also noted by Sabina (1985) as a benefit of post-R.N. education.

Muzio and Ohashi (1979) state that diploma graduates possess prior knowledge and socialization that may enhance new learning. However, because prior knowledge may be "embedded in a system of thinking that conflicts with the new theoretical framework" it may also act as a barrier to learning something new. Learning to incorporate new information may involve rejection of previous assumptions. According to Muzio and Ohashi:

> ...while generic students are undergoing professional role development, R.N.s are experiencing the entirely different process of role change. For them, prior values, norms, and standards must be rejected before new roles can be assumed. This is a difficult and often painful task. (p. 531).

This concept is supported by Hart et al. (1985) where "feelings of conflict" were reported by students whenever they felt that their competence and previous knowledge was under question. Balough (1980) also describes the

difficulties that post-R.N. students experience in making transitions to new roles as a cost of attending the program. Students in Balough's study also believed that they had changed through their education, while the 'system' (health care) had not. This in turn lead to feelings of helplessness, frustration, and anger.

Jackson (1984) addresses another issue related to students who continue to work in nursing while attending university. In those cases, many students use two languages, the "academic jargon" of university and the "nursing jargon" at work. If they tried to use their new language at work they were considered "deviant" (p. 24).

Hillsmith (1978) found that in some cases the reason for negative reactions to post-R.N. study was the content of the degree program itself. Some comments made by respondents were: "I enjoy learning but do not feel I am a better nurse because of the B.S.N program but, yes, a more aware person;" "(I) Probably would have done the same without school, from journals, lectures, etc.;" and "(I) Haven't been presented with any new material" (p. 100-101).

Social relations. Both benefits and costs of social relations are associated with the experience of attending a university program. Benefits are generally related to socializing at school, while costs are generally associated with the time away from family and friends.

Gove and Peterson (1980), in an article on employment of wives and the family life-cycle, note that an important aspect of working outside the home for women is the social contact they experience. Such interactions contribute to a healthy sense of self-esteem and feelings of achievement. Alvarez (1985), in a study of maternal employment, also found that contact with people was identified as a source of satisfaction for mothers employed outside the home.

Durojaiye and Donald (1984) report that mature women students are strongly motivated to pursue studies because of the need for both social stimulus and mental stimulus. While the future financial benefits of further education were discussed as an important motivation, these authors commented that, "...the fact that many married women returners go to college, for which there is no immediate monetary reward, suggests that socialization and self-esteem offer more satisfaction than financial gain" (p. 58). Chapman (1986) and Mishler (1983) also note that the benefits for mature aged university students are those associated with social contact and 'getting out.'

Many studies of employed women focus on their children. Results of studies vary on whether or not dual career families are helpful or harmful to children, but there is a concurrence regarding guilt felt by mothers who are away from their children while at work which likely also applies to mothers attending school. Roland and Harris (1979) for example, report that guilt feelings of a working wife-mother are most often related to the children. Michelson (1985) reports that some of the studied effects on children whose mothers are employed are that the pre-school children likely spend less time with their mothers and more time with non kin adults and peers than children whose mothers are at home. Many career women, according to Bassett (1985), feel the most significant cost of working is the time they have given up with their children. One of the sentiments noted was the disappointment of missing some of the milestones in young children's lives such as first steps and first words. Couch (1982) also suggests that pressures of having a family and working outside the home may result in parents spending decreased time with their children, and with each other. Lieber (1980), in her study of thirty working women, found these women were concerned with spending more time with their children and husbands.

Assheton-Smith and Zubot discuss that in order to successfully complete training and continue working, a woman may have to withdraw from some of her family responsibilities, "such as attending school functions, preparing for festive family events, and attending to a sick child. She may feel guilty, stressed and fatigued in her attempt to fulfill her major responsibilities in and outside the home" (1984, p. 5). Chapman (1986) also found that students felt guilty about paying less attention to family members. Jackson (1984) as well discovered that post-R.N. students had to contend with the interference of family responsibilities and the loss of social and work contacts because of the demands of studies.

Acquisition of credentials. For some students, the motivation of attending a degree program is related to the credential itself and what it stands for. Some of the post-R.N. students may feel pressure to obtain the degree since it may be a requirement for new nurses by the year 2000. Getting that 'piece of paper' may become more important than the learning and experiences that go along with it. Nurses may feel resentful if they perceive that they are not given credit for knowledge associated with their diploma program and years of experience. It is possible they may be motivated to get the degree in order to 'prove themselves.' Nurses may also feel that having a degree is very important to reinforce the 'professionalism' of nursing and ultimately believe that all R.N.s should possess a degree in nursing.

Mishler (1983) states that satisfaction of having the degree was noted by 58% as a very important and 18% as the most important benefit of post-secondary education to the adult students in that study (p. 218). Sewall (1984) also found adult learners reported gaining the satisfaction of having a degree as a motivation for returning to school.

Compliance with authority. This category consists of motivating factors for obtaining a degree in nursing that result from complying with authority. It is closely associated with the acquisition of credentials.

Many positions in nursing which, for many years, did not require a degree in nursing now commonly do. Unit supervisors, home care nurses, public health nurses and nursing instructors are some examples of nursing positions that are often filled by nurses who have a degree. It is not uncommon for nurses without a degree and in such positions to receive strong encouragement from their managers to obtain a degree in nursing. As such positions become vacant, they are likely to be filled by nurses who are degree holders. And those who do not leave their positions may feel even more pressure as their co-workers increasingly become degreed nurses.

Hillsmith (1978) found some of the reasons given by the post-R.N.s in her study when asked why they felt they needed the degree were: "My head nurse/supervisor urged me to get it"; "I have to have it to keep my present job" and "It's going to be mandatory anyway."

Personal well-being. The benefits and costs associated with this category are many and varied. They include the personal motivations for entering such a program and all the positive and negative feelings associated with the experience of attending a university program.

Bassett (1985), in a 1984 commissioned poll of Canadian career women, found various 'non-monetary' reasons why women maintain careers. Some of those mentioned include; feelings of dignity, fulfillment, enjoyment, respect, independence, recognition, and self-worth. In fact, fulfillment and enjoyment were equal with financial independence as overall reasons given for working. Women in this study also indicated they believed having a career made them 'more interesting'. Likewise, Alvarez (1985) found that women gain a sense of

personal autonomy and independence from employment. Assheton-Smith and Zubot (1984), in their study of costs and benefits of training 'welfare' women, note that such training may help build self-confidence and a sense of achievement for these women.

Self-esteem is presented by Sekaran (1983) as a positive aspect of employment, and it was also noted by Borst and Walker (1986) as an expectation related to achievement of personal goals by attending a post-R.N. degree program. Durojaiye and Donald (1984), in a study of female mature students, report that self-esteem and self-fulfillment as well as other reasons related to 'personal satisfaction' were more frequent than 'career advancement' as motivations given for returning to school.

Personal change or growth was identified by Chapman (1986), Balough (1980) and Sewall (1984) as positive aspects of returning to school for adult learners. Sewall found that 42% of the students in his study chose a personal growth goal as the primary reason for adult undergraduates seeking a degree. Some of the factors included under personal growth in that study were: simply to learn; to achieve independence and a sense of identity. Mishler (1983) also found that achieving independence and a sense of identity were noted as important goals for the adults in that study who were pursuing a college degree.

Couch (1982) reports that when the wife works, marriages can be strengthened by providing greater opportunities for a sharing relationship based on equality and for personal growth and fulfillment. Couch further discusses how even the negative effects that maternal employment may have on the family (in the forms of conflicts and time pressures), in the long run may make for more effective family communication.

Hillsmith (1978) asked the post-R.N. degree students in her study why they felt they needed the degree. Fully 84% indicated personal satisfaction as a

reason. These students were also asked if whether or not, while going through the B.S.N. program, they felt that they had received personal enrichment and development. Forty-seven percent answered yes and another 47% indicated this as true sometimes (p. 101).

Returning to school has many positive personal aspects associated with the learning process itself. According to Chapman (1986), some of these include: the joy and excitement of learning; the university experience as expanding; feelings of direction, doors opening and accomplishment; the catalytic effect university has on the 'quest for learning;' interesting classes; learning about what is available in the libraries; the quality of the professors; the sense of achievement and 'constructive escapism;' and as an 'adventure'. Similarly, Hart et al. (1985) note that one of the post-R.N. students in their study indentified some of the positive aspects of attending school as: there were interesting and exciting things to learn both in class and out; as well as enjoying the challenge and joy of learning.

There are also some negative aspects identified in the literature related to the learning experience of mature students attending a post-secondary institution. Perry (1986) noted that studying, reading, and paper writing skills may be lacking in these women, depending on how long they have been away from studying. The University of Alberta Task Force Report on Mature Students (1983) indicates these same concerns, as well as the resulting lack of self-confidence for these students.

Sabina (1985) interviewed two post-R.N. mature students and found that some of the difficulties for these students were initially in relation to: feeling inferior and lacking self-esteem; having unreal expectations of a full study load and family responsibilities; not knowing how they learned best; differing expectations of professors and stress related to dealing with several

assignments and major events. Likewise, Jackson (1985) noted a major barrier for R.N.s attending the degree program was the lack of confidence the students had in their learning capabilities. Jackson also discusses how the demands of such a program are often a shock to these students. Some students may place tremendous pressure on themselves and perceive low grades as a personal criticism, not as a reflection of the assignment itself. Styran (1985), in a discussion of another post-R.N. program, states that because such a need had been identified, a specific course was developed to help these students with literature searches, essay writing, finding reference material, and time planning.

The pressure of a university program can be very stressful. One student (Hart et al., 1985) noted the 24-hour-a-day stress which lasts from September until May because of assignments and deadlines. Another student commented that it was stressful to be a student in the area where one had previously been a practicing professional. As previously noted in this chapter, Balough (1980) and Hart et al. (1985) discuss some of the difficulties with role transition that R.N.s experience when taking their degree. Hale and Boyd (1981) note that frustration and anger are frequently observed among R.N. students pursuing a degree.

Gove and Peterson (1980) discuss psychological benefits for women working outside the home such as avoidance of the household role which women have found to be unrewarding. In their view, working provides a means for them to escape the pressures of motherhood, marriage, and family. Mishler (1983) reports that getting away from the routine daily living was identified by 14% of the respondents in that study as an important motivating factor for returning to school.

However, attending a university program, like employment, results in less time that can be spent at home, with family and friends, or in general, on all

other responsibilities. Couch (1982) reports that some of the problems experienced by families are not a result of the women working per se but rather from the lack of support networks for these women and their families. One example given is the inadequacy of existing child care services, including after school care. Bassett (1985) also found similar concerns of working women. For mothers, leaving children in the care of someone else is frequently regarded as a negative aspect of outside employment. Daycares, day homes, extended family, neighbours etc., are some options, but the worry of finding a good caregiver is a serious one for women, who take the major responsibility for finding caregivers for their children. Durojaiye and Donald (1984), Jackson (1984), Perry (1986), and The University of Alberta Task Force (1983) also identify child care as an area of concern, specifically for mature female students.

Couch (1982) notes that, although husbands may say they approve of their wives' outside employment, this support does not become a more equal sharing of household responsibilities. As a result, these working women are not changing roles, they are merely adding new ones. For the wife-mother, the result of working as well as doing a disproportionate amount of the household labour is less leisure time or 'time for herself.' Michelson (1985) found that women in full-time employment still spend approximately three times as much time on household duties and child care than do husbands. The ratio is larger when women work part-time and larger yet when women are not employed outside the home.

The desire to work and also maintain all other previously held roles has led to what is referred to as the 'superwoman syndrome.' Role overload (Gray, 1980) or role strain (Morgan and Hock, 1984)) are the result. These role conflicts are associated with worry, pressure, tension, guilt, etc. There just does not seem to be enough time to engage in all the activities chosen. Couch (1982)

discusses role conflict, or "the hassle of home and family vs. job" as being a problem of working employed wives but not employed husbands. In that study, wives working outside the home noted excessive time demands and leisure activity sacrifice as major problems they experienced.

Alvarez (1985), in his study of 152 families where both parents worked, found that many of the mothers viewed their employment as conflicting with their familial roles and responsibilities. Sekaran (1983) discusses the stress of multiple roles related to outside employment, especially for the women, since it is usually the women who devote more time and energy to running the house, meeting social obligations, and so on. Hester and Dickerson (1981) also discuss some of the stresses of dual career families, especially noting female role conflicts and the challenge of running a home. Leiber (1980), in a study of 30 working women, asked them about role conflict. Most of the group did experience role conflict. Their concerns were primarily with spending more time with their families, while also finding time for household duties and themselves. Feelings of being overwhelmed, exhaustion, guilt and anger were emotions reported as a consequence of heavy demands of time and energy as well as the time away from family life due to professional commitments.

Mature students find similar difficulties. Disruption of family life was also identified in the University Task Force Report (1983) as an area of concern, specifically for the mature female students, associated with multiple responsibilites. Durojaiye and Donald (1984) found that the mature women students in that study balanced heavy family-related demands with their motivation to improve their careers. Perry (1986) states that changing roles and resulting conflicts may result as increased demands from attending school cause adjustments to be made by the rest of the family and that most of the women do experience at least some resistance from their family upon returning

to school. Mature students identify many situational problems which affect their lives. Time pressure associated with the balancing of multiple responsibilities was seen as a problem by over three-quarters of the respondents identified in the University of Alberta Task Force Report (1983). DuGas (1985), in a study of R.N.s conducted to determine their interest in continuing education, found that family responsibilites were most often held to be the principal barrier to continuing their education.

Richter and Witten (1984), in a study of adult students, found similar difficulties for those students including lack of time, home responsibilities, and inadequate energy and stamina. Chapman (1986) also found that all members of his study group of mature undergraduates and many of their spouses described themselves as feeling 'overwhelmed' by the situation of attending university and trying to maintain their home life. He comments that, "this sense of being overwhelmed was not a simple case of feeling busy from time to time; rather, it was an experience of emotions and personal resources constantly stretched to the limit" (p. 254). Chapman found that a number of students in his study indicated that contact with family and friends necessarily decreased because of the time spent on school and other responsibilities. These mature, married students expressed feelings of guilt about a number of the changes associated with studying. They felt guilty about giving up a career to attend school, not contributing to family income, spending money, not studying enough, having less time for housekeeping duties, and their inability to maintain religious commitments (1986, p. 479-480). He also observed frustration and anger among this group of mature students.

Because of the perception of feeling overwhelmed, time contraints, and generally a change in lifestyle, many mature students experience uncertainty, and wonder if the outcome will be worth it. As a student in Balough's (1980)

study stated: "Some of us had sacrificed important aspects of our personal and professional lives that had given us great satisfaction in the past. At this point we felt that we had received little in return" (p. 114). Also, according to Lonberg (1984), most of the nurses pursuing a degree do so at great personal expense and perhaps with little support. They often ask: "Will the effort, money, and time it takes from work and personal responsibilities really be worth it?" (p. 1297).

Social Status. Students may return to school in anticipation of increased social status that may come as a result of the value placed on possessing a degree in nursing by the profession. Other sources of respect and admiration of the student attending university might be from family and friends.

Status and prestige are seen as important psychological rewards for women who seek employment. Hiller and Philliber (1978), in a study of working women, discuss how in the past women derived their status from the occupational attainments of their husbands, regardless of their own activities. However, many changes in today's society have contributed to women striving to achieve their own status. Larwood, Stromberg, and Gutek (1985) also note the increased status for employed women. They argue that women who are employed have more influence within the home, specifically in relation to family decision-making thereby increasing their sense of power in the marriage.

Chapman's (1986) study found that one of the anticipated long-term benefits for the mature students was increased respect and prestige derived from a university degree. Jackson (1984) found some of the motivating factors for returning to school for the post-R.N. students in her study included increasing career status by obtaining a nursing position that is perceived as having more status (such as community health and teaching) and also increasing and protecting their professional self-image. Borst and Walker (1986) also report that the nursing students in their study believed that attending

such a program would result in gaining a broader, more positive role of the nurse as well as increased employment status. A student in Hillsmith's (1978) study stated that the degree program "...greatly expanded my attitude toward nursing" (p. 100).

Financial aspects. Many students return to school to obtain a degree in anticipation of a higher paying position. This is an important benefit to many students. However, the financial costs are also very significant.

The financial benefits of employment are obvious; many women in fact have to work because they need the money. However, Alvarez (1985) found that women who worked primarily for financial reasons less often noted enjoying more social contact and appeared to incur more of the costs of employment than the benefits.

Chapman (1986) reports that mature university students anticipate a greater likelihood of financial rewards in terms of salary increases once they complete a university degree. Hersom (1981) also notes the anticipated income changes.

Boothby (1986) discusses the human-capital model in relation to women, in which job training is viewed as an investment process. "Human-capital investment can occur either on the job (in which case its costs are foregone earnings) or in school (in which case the direct costs of attending school must be added to foregone earnings)" (p. I). However, as women are likely to remove themselves from the labour force for periods of time, often in relation to child-bearing, and since human capital depreciates during this time, their lifetime investment return is lowered.

Hersom and Smith (1981) observe that for women, most of their training is done in public educational institutions at the taxpayers' and students' expense, rather than on the job at the employers' expense. This is because of

women's attachments to the family and subsequent responsibilities; they are not viewed as good capital investments by employers and therefore must bear much of the costs of post-secondary education themselves.

Chapman (1986) found that regardless of the family's original financial situation, almost all of the families in his study indicated stress in relation to finances when attending university. Hillsmith (1978), Hart et al. (1985), Jackson (1984) and Perry (1986) also note that a major negative aspect for post-R.N. students is the financial cost. Jackson reports that insufficient funds were viewed to be a major problem and married students were especially concerned about contributing financially to their families and the expense of child care. Jackson goes on to say that many R.N.s leave a career without promise of a job upon completion of the degree and may utilize all their savings to attend university. Perry (1986) notes that one difficulty lies in the fact that many women may only be able to afford to go to school part-time, yet many programs of financial assistance require full-time attendance. Also discussed was the fact that when applying for financial assistance the husband's earnings may not allow the wife to qualify even though the family may not be able to afford the additional expense.

It might appear that some nurses are able to obtain financial assistance or time off from work to attend school more readily than others. In a survey of hospitals and health institutions across Canada, Allen (1985) found that , "Only 20 percent of the respondents said education bursaries are available for staff members" (p. 12). When the respondents were asked if employees were given time off in order to attend classes, only 20% said yes, and of the 20%, 60% indicated this was only for nurses in management and administration or those who were clinical specialists.

Not only must the student pay for tuition and books, but if the student is away from work for two years, it is unlikely lost wages will be made up, even with salary increases. Hart et al. (1985) note that some of the financial costs for R.N.s are those resulting from tuition, lost work time and job security.

Improved working conditions. As well as anticipating increased monetary benefits, obtaining a degree in nursing specifically is associated with improved working conditions such as not having to work shiftwork.

Jackson (1984) discusses some of the motivational factors for obtaining a degree in nursing as hoping to work in community health or to teach nursing - areas that experienced staff nurses may perceive as having higher status and better working conditions. Wanting to avoid working shifts and weekends was identified most often by those students between the ages of 20 and 30 years, and also those students who were staff nurses. This is in fact an interesting motivation, since if eventually all new nurses will possess a degree in nursing, having a degree will not necessarily result in a job with regular weekday hours.

Demographic/Personal Characteristics

The literature indicates that certain characteristics of employed women and/or students affect the benefits and costs that may or may not be incurred by them. Some of these characteristics and demographic variables include; marital status, dependents, age, length of time since previously attending an educational institution, household responsibilities, other outside employment or extracurricular activities, and the financial situation. Whether or not someone is married or has dependents will most certainly affect costs incurred when spending time away from the family to attend an educational program, since they have responsibilities to others beside themselves. Nye (1980) notes in his discussion of the assumptions of Choice and Exchange Theory, that humans

consider rewards and costs to the other members of their groups when choosing alternatives.

Past experiences in work or school also affect how one responds to subsequent experiences. It is by considering personal characteristics of the students, that the interpretation of what constitutes costs and benefits to them can be understood.

Summary

Choice and Exchange Theory provides a framework through which experiences of students attending a post-R.N. degree program can be examined. There are many benefits and costs that may be experienced by the R.N. who chooses to return to school to complete a degree in nursing. A review of the literature has focussed on the costs and benefits experienced by women working outside the home, by mature students, and by post-R.N. students. Each student has unique circumstances that influence perceptions of benefits and costs in education, However, students with similar backgrounds will likely describe similar costs and benefits.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

In this chapter, the study group and the research methods utilized will be presented and discussed. First the sample population will be described as to size and key characteristics. Second, the ethical considerations taken for this study will be explained and third, the development, content and administration of the data collection instrument (questionnaire) will be discussed.

Study Population

The target population was the students in the Post-R.N. Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program at the University of Alberta. These students, who are completing the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Science in Nursing, have all previously earned their diploma in nursing from a post-secondary institution, but not a university. Hayes (1984) describes the characteristics of the post-R.N. group:

> Such students may have had a variety of work experiences, various lengths of time since participating in formal education and a wealth of alternative learning experiences. It has been demonstrated that the Post-R.N. group of students exhibits considerable heterogeneity (Ford and Hayes, 1976; Woolley, 1978; Jackson, 1984), have complex motivations for returning to school, (Hillsmith, 1978) and often display hostility, frustration and emotional crises in attempting to cope with the educational system (p. 1).

As of September 25, 1986, there were 239 students enrolled in the Post-R.N. Program at the University of Alberta. Of these, 194 were full-time and 45 were part-time students. The program consists of 24 half courses and, according to the 1986/1987 Faculty of Nursing Calendar, can be completed in two academic years plus one additional session. The courses include both

nursing and non-nursing (electives in philosophy or religious studies, political science or social science) subject areas.

The literature review, included in the previous chapter, focussed primarily on mature female students because these are the type of students who are typically in a post-R.N. program. The University of Alberta has designated students 21 years of age and over as "mature." By virtue of the fact that these students have previously obtained a nursing diploma (length of time at school averaging two to three years) and often have worked prior to returning to school, the mature age description is likely accurate.

Although the number of male nurses in Canada is increasing, (from 0.34% in 1951 to 2.4% in 1984 according to Okrainec, 1986), the vast majority of nurses are female. Therefore, it was decided to address the experiences of female students only in this study, although both men and women students in the program were included in the survey.

Sampling and generalizability. The sample was determined by the accessible population who attended the classes in which the questionnaires were distributed. Of 239 possible respondents, 119 (50%) completed the questionnaire. Babbie (1986) refers to this method of nonprobability sampling as "reliance on available subjects." The findings, therefore, pertain only to the group of students who completed the questionnaire. However, the results may have applicability to all students in this program as well as other post-R.N. programs.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance for this study was received from the Department of Educational Foundations Ethics Review Committee and permission to utilize the study population was obtained from the Faculty of Nursing's Ethics and Research Committee .

When the questionnaire was administered to the students by the researcher, the purposes and procedures (questionnaire data analysis) of this study were fully outlined. Confidentiality was stressed and assured through anonymity of the responses (no names to be put on the questionnaires). The students were informed that their participation did not relate to their course work in any way, and that completion and return of the questionnaire indicated that they understood each is confidential and anonymous. Also, respondents were informed at the outset that, since there was anonymity of the responses, no questionnaires could be returned. But the students were advised that they were free to withdraw from participating at any time up to the point when the questionnaires were handed in. The first page of the questionnaire (Appendix 1) is a letter to respondents informing them of the purpose of the study as well as their anonymity.

The Data Collection Instrument

The seven page questionnaire (Appendix 1) was devised primarily from the review of literature pertaining to costs and benefits of employment for women, mature students and post-R.N. students. It contains seven sections. The first three sections provide a list of statements which measure costs and benefits that might be experienced by students in a Post-R.N. degree program. The fourth and fifth sections are open-ended questions allowing the students to indicate any additional costs and benefits that pertain to them which were not listed in the previous sections. The sixth section asks the students to indicate if, in their estimation, the benefits outweigh, are outweighed by, or equal the costs. The seventh section obtained certain demographic/personal characteristics of the respondents. Each section will be described in more detail below.

Five-point Likert scales were utilized to measure intensity of the students' feelings about each statement in the first three sections. The Likert scale is

commonly used to measure attitudes by expressing declarative statements (positive and negative) for the respondents to score appropriately (Polit and Hungler, 1983).

To reduce the number of variables to be dealt with in this study, only costs and benefits that were frequently identified in the literature were included in the questionnaire. Further, since a questionnaire rather than interviews was the instrument used to obtain the data, items that were easily understood and least likely to be misinterpreted were selected for inclusion.

The first section measures expressions of feelings and thoughts that may apply to the student engaged in a post-R.N. program. The Likert scales range from 1 for 'strongly agree' through 5 for 'strongly disagree.' The second section lists social/family aspects that may apply to the student since attending the program. The scales continue to designate 1 for 'strongly agree' through 5 for 'strongly disagree.' The third section provides a list of reasons why the students may have returned to school (ie. motivations, or benefits expected). The Likert scale ranges again from 1 to 5, but the description of 1 in this section is 'extremely important' and the description of 5 is 'not at all important.' All the statements in this section are considered benefits since they are, for the most part, anticipated positive aspects. For example, two of the statements identified 'pressure' as a motivation. In these cases, relief from the perceived pressure would be viewed as a benefit.

After each of the first three sections, the respondents are asked to circle (by number) the three statements most applicable to their personal situation. This was to obtain an additional measure of the factors regarded as having the greatest personal importance to respondents.

Sections 4 and 5 are open-ended questions designed to determine if respondents perceived additional benefits and costs (respectively) that had not

been identified by the questionnaire. The primary purpose of this section was to determine if the literature review had encompassed all possible types of costs and benefits. A secondary purpose was to allow the students an opportunity to discuss their personal situations.

In section 6, the student was requested to make an assessment of her/his own overall costs and benefits of pursuing the program by indicating if the benefits outweigh, are outweighed by, or equal the costs. This was designed to provide data for the fourth research question concerning whether or not the student believes the program is (potentially) profitable.

The final section identifies some specific demographic/personal characteristics that are presented in the literature as influencing the educational experiences of these types of students. Data about the respondent's age, marital status, family, extracurricular responsibilities/activities, work and school experiences, and financial sources were obtained by this part of the questionnaire.

To conduct a pilot study, five nurses filled out the questionnaire prior to distribution to the sample. As a result, three statements proved to be be somewhat difficult to interpret and they were therefore deleted from the original questionnaire.

Data Collection

Faculty of Nursing staff members were consulted regarding the appropriate classes for administration of the questionnaire to obtain the largest possible sample size. The researcher was admitted to four classes of post-R.N. students in April of 1987. A brief explanation about the nature of the questionnaire/project was given, as well as assurance that participation was absolutely voluntary and the responses strictly confidential.

In an attempt to reach all students, including those who may not have attended classes in which the questionnaires were distributed, a number of questionnaires were left at the Post-R.N. office at the Faculty of Nursing. A notice was posted on the Post-R.N. students' bulletin board seeking volunteers to complete the questionnaire if they had not previously done so. As noted previously, 119 of the 239 possible respondents completed the questionnaires. Of the 119 completed, 115 were obtained in the classroom setting and four were from students who filled out questionnaires they obtained from the Post-R.N. office.

Coding Procedures

The responses on the completed questionnaires were coded, as were the open-ended questions according to categories assigned by frequency of appearance. The data on the Assembler Coding Forms were keypunched onto cards and then transferred onto the MTS (Michigan Terminal System) computing system. The SPSSx (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) statistical program was utilized to compute and analyze the data.

The initial frequencies were based on the five point Likert scale. These five categories were then collapsed into trichotomies. In the first and second sections (expressions of feelings and thoughts and social/family aspects respectively), 1 and 2 at the 'strongly agree' end of the scale were collapsed, as were 4 and 5 at the 'strongly disagree' end of the scale. The middle category, which is considered neither agree nor disagree, was retained. In the third section (reasons for returning to school), the first two categories at the 'extremely important' end of the scale were combined to create the value 'important' and the two categories at the other end of the scale were collapsed and designated 'not important.' Again, the middle category of (3) remained as a separate value. (Frequencies for all five categories are located in Appendix 2.)

Some of the categories of demographic variables (age, marital status, age of children, years worked as an R.N., year of enrollment, and number of courses that will be completed at end of this term), were collapsed for ease of data analysis and interpretation.

Crosstabulations of selected dependent variables (statements of costs and benefits listed in the first six sections) and independent variables (personal/ demographic characteristics in the last section) were computed to determine whether the perceptions of certain costs and benefits are related to demographic variables.

Summary

A sample of 119 respondents was obtained from the population of students enrolled in the Post-R.N. Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program at the University of Alberta. The respondents completed a questionnaire which measured their perceptions of selected costs and benefits that they might expect to experience. Of the 240 possible respondents, a 50% (119) response rate was obtained. The findings pertain only to these 119 respondents, as it cannot be assumed that a non-random sample such as this is representative of the population in question.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

The data will be presented as they relate to the four research questions. Those that pertain to the first three questions will be discussed together. These questions are the following: First, what are the perceived costs and benefits (rewards) for students in the post-R.N. sample population? Second, how do the perceived costs and benefits of these students compare to those identified in other research? Third, do various demographic/personal characteristics affect the identification of certain costs and benefits? Finally, the last research question will be discussed, do these students view the program as being (potentially) profitable?

Before discussing the research questions in relation to the data, the demographic/personal data collected from the last section of the questionnaire will be presented in order to provide a description of the sample population.

Demographic Data

Table 1 presents a summary of the personal/demographic data of the respondents. Of the 119 respondents, 118 (or 99%) were female. Twenty-three percent (23%) were aged 20 to 24 years, 49% were aged 25 to 34 years and 28% were 35 years of age or older.

Table 1

Demographic Data - Summary Table

Gender	**female** 99% (118)		**male** 1% (1)
Age	**20-24** 23% (28)	**25-34** 49% (58)	**35+** 28% (33)
Marital Status	**single** 50% (60)	**married** 39% (46)	**other** 11% (13)
Dependents	**yes** 31% (37)		**no** 69% (82)
Type of Dependents	**children** 89% (33)		**other** 10% (4)
Number of Dependents	**one** 38% (14)	**two** 43% (16)	**three** 19% (7)
Age of Children	**pre-school** 19% (8)		**school** 80% (33)

The respondents reported their marital status as follows: 50% indicated they were single, 39% were married and 11% selected the category 'other' (which included divorced, separated, and widowed). Less than one third of this sample had dependents, but of this group, almost 90% reported that their dependents were children. Of these, 38% had one child, 43% had two children, and 19% had three children. No respondents indicated having more than three children. School age children (six years and over) made up 80% of the total number of children and preschool children (five years and less) formed the remainder of this group. No students indicated that they had children under one year of age.

Table 2 presents a summary of the educational and employment data obtained from the respondents. Fifteen percent graduated from a diploma school of nursing during the 1960's, 32% graduated between 1970 and 1979 and 52% graduated during the years 1980 through 1985. Since graduating from a diploma school of nursing, over one-third of the respondents have taken other post-secondary courses. Of this group, 40% took university courses, 50% completed clinical specialty programs (eg. Intensive Care Nursing), 9% had partaken in employment related workshops, and 45% had taken various other courses (eg. management).

Table 2

Educational and Employment Data - Summary Table

Year of Diploma Graduation	**1960-69**	**1970-79**	**1980-85**
	15% (18)	32% (38)	52% (62)
Have Taken Other Post-Secondary Courses	**Yes**		**No**
	36% (42)		64% (76)
Types of Post-Secondary Courses Taken	**university**		40% (17)
	clinical specialty		50% (21)
	workshop		9% (4)
	other		45% (19)
Student Status	**Full-time**		**Part-time**
	95% (110)		5% (6)
Year of Enrollment	**1978-85**		**1986-87**
	37% (42)		63% (73)
Number of Courses Completed by end of Term	**1-8**	**9-16**	**17-24**
	5% (6)	49% (58)	45% (53)
Last Nursing Position	**staff nurse**		73% (87)
	hospital management		8% (10)
	nursing education		7% (9)
	other		11% (13)
Primary Financial Sources While Attending School	**spouse or family**		30% (36)
	own savings		51% (60)
	scholarship/bursary		9% (11)
	loan		21% (25)
	full-time work		3% (4)
	part-time work		42% (50)
	other		1% (1)

The respondents were asked to indicate which title best describes their last nursing position. Seventy-three percent had been employed as staff nurses, 8% were classified as hospital management, 7% had positions in nursing education, and 11% noted 'other' positions such as nursing consultant.

At the time of the study, a large majority (95%) of the respondents were full-time students. The data also indicate that many of them continue to work part-time while studying, either in the summer or through the winter sessions. Indeed, 42% indicated that part-time work is one of their primary financial resources while attending university.

By the end of the (1987) term, 5% will have completed up to eight courses (or up to one third of the 24 courses required), 49% will have nine to sixteen courses completed (or up to two-thirds of the required number) and 45% will have at least 17 of the 24 courses required for their B.Sc.N. degree. In other words, most of the respondents were well into the program at the time of this research.

Perceived Costs and Benefits Data

Findings and analysis will now be discussed for the dependent variables (perceived costs and benefits) in relation to the relevant literature reviewed. Where applicable, comments written by respondents in the open-ended sections of the questionnaire will be highlighted. The perceived benefits and costs will be discussed under the nine categories presented in Chapter Two. These categories are; professional advancement, professional knowledge, social relations, acquisition of credentials, compliance with authority (these five concepts were developed and utilized by Boshier, 1977). Additionally, the categories of personal well-being, social status, financial aspects, and improved working conditions are utilized as they relate specifically to the experience of attending a post-R.N. nursing degree program.

Selected crosstabulations will be presented to ascertain whether certain demographic/personal characteristics affect students' perceptions of costs and benefits while attending the Post-R.N. program (the third research question).

Professional advancement. Under the category of professional advancement, the expected benefit of expanded opportunities for nursing positions was identified as an important motivation by 94% of the respondents, and, relatedly, the motivation of greater opportunities for career advancement was noted as important by 95% of the sample (see Table 3). These very high percentages are of interest because, although these nurses would not be required to obtain a degree in nursing in order to practice as registered nurses, they did believe that a degree would expand their opportunities for positions and advancement in their careers. This indicates that most respondents would like to 'use their degree' to advance and/or expand in their careers. As one respondent noted (regarding completing the degree program), "It is simply something to be done order to advance in one's career." Another student stated that, "(With the degree) I am able to continue in a management position in the city which I previously held in a small town without my degree."

Table 3

Professional Advancement Data

Benefits

	important		not important
1. I felt there would be expanded opportunities for nursing positions.	94%	5%	1%
2. I felt there would be greater opportunities for career advancement.	95%	5%	-

Professional knowledge. Professional knowledge is the second category of benefits and costs. Table 4 presents the frequencies of this category. The benefits of professional growth, further developing of communication skills and increased knowledge of nursing theory had very similar percentages of agreement. One student noted that, "It (the program) broadened my scope in nursing generally." Another cited the benefit of "increased knowledge in specific areas i.e., physiology", and another respondent noted the benefits of "increased integration of core nursing skills and increased critical thinking and evaluation abilities" and "(the) ability to study many areas in nursing that were of interest but (I) never had time for when working full-time."

Table 4

Professional Knowledge Data

Benefits

	agree		disagree
1. I feel a sense of professional growth.	72%	20%	7%
2. I am further developing my communication skills.	69%	22%	9%
3. I am increasing my knowledge of nursing theory.	71%	21%	8%
4. I am increasing my level of clinical skills.	18%	34%	49%
	important		not important
5. I felt I would develop increased confidence in my overall nursing ability.	56%	25%	19%
6. I felt I would develop more competence in my nursing skills.	42%	32%	26%

Costs

	agree		disagree
1. I don't feel I am learning anything new.	5%	23%	71%

Although 42% of the respondents indicated increased competence in nursing skills as a motivating factor for attending this program, only 18% of the group agreed that "I am increasing my level of clinical skills" as a benefit of attending the program. In fact, a respondent noted a "decrease in nursing skills in practice because of decreased work" (nursing employment) and another

commented that, since quitting full-time work to enter this program, "My (nursing) skills are now rusty." It might be hypothesized that such students may feel that they achieved the desired level of 'technical' skills from their diploma program and work experience, and that they perceive the university degree program as a device for pursuing the more theoretical aspects of nursing. In this sense, the university learning experience is not viewed as involving any new nursing 'skills.'

Hillsmith (1978) noted that students in her study felt they were not being presented with any new material. Unlike her findings, only 5% of the respondents in the present sample agreed with the statement "I don't feel I am learning anything new", and none chose "strongly agree."

Social relations. The category of social relations has benefits related to social contact. The statement "I am experiencing increased social contact," was agreed to by 34% of the respondents, and disagreed to by 41% of the respondents (see Table 5). This is perhaps because the respondents have interpreted the question to mean increased social contact outside of the school experience (which is not likely) rather than during the school experience. One example is a student who strongly disagreed with this statement and yet noted "Peer contact and support" in her/his written comments on additional benefits. Also, the benefit of getting to know other students was agreed to by 73% of the respondents. (Therefore, this question should have somehow distinguished between meeting and maintaining relationships with nurses in the program from being able to maintain social relationships outside the program).

Table 5

Social Relations Data

	agree<---------->		disagree
Benefits			
1. I am experiencing increased social contact.	34%	25%	41%
2. I am enjoying getting to know other students.	73%	20%	8%
Costs			
1. I spend too much time away from my children.	82%	12%	6%
2. I spend too much time away from family and friends.	69%	21%	10%

Costs pertaining to social relations include; the time away from family and friends because of attending classes, attending study groups and doing homework. "I spend too much time away from my children" was agreed to by 82% of the respondents to whom this statement was applicable. Bassett (1985) found that many career women felt the most significant cost of working is the time they have given up with their children, especially very young children, and missing the 'milestones' such as first words and steps. Table 6 is a crosstabulation of those respondents who agreed with this statement by the ages of their children. Although the numbers of respondents with preschool children were relatively small, all of them agreed with the statement and 80% of those respondents with school aged children agreed that they spend too much time away from their child(ren). One student wrote that, "The effects of having Mom away from the children (have been) detrimental in some respects."

Table 6

Spending Too Much Time Away From Children by Age of Children

		Age	
		preschool	school age
I spend too much time away from my children.	agree	100% (8)	80% (20)
	neither	-	12% (3)
	disagree	-	8% (2)

n=33
$p \leq .05$

The statement "I spend too much time away from family and friends" was agreed to by 69% of the respondents. The University of Alberta Senate report (1980) cites 'disruption of family life' and 'child care' as two areas of concern, specifically for the mature female students. Assheton-Smith and Zubot (1984) suggest that, in order to successfully complete a training program, women may have to withdraw from some of their family responsibilities. One respondent in this sample wrote that, "I have no time to socialize with my best friend, I feel pulled because I spend lots of time studying and feel I neglect my home and children." Table 7 crosstabulates responses to the statement on spending too much time away from family and friends by dependents and their ages. Respondents with preschool children and school aged children were 38% and 18% (respectively) more likely to agree with the statement than those respondents without children.

Table 7

Spending Too Much Time Away From Family and Friends by Children

		Children and Ages		
		no children	preschool	school age
I spend too much time away from family and friends.	agree	62% (51)	100% (8)	80% (20)
	neither	24% (20)	-	16% (4)
	disagree	13% (11)	-	4% (1)

n=115
$p \leq .13$

Acquisition of credentials. Acquisition of credentials is another category of benefits associated with a post-R.N. program. In this study, all the statements in this category were in relation to motivations or expected benefits of attending the program. The statement "I felt that all registered nurses should possess a degree in nursing" was agreed to by 30% of the respondents as an important motivating factor for obtaining a degree in nursing. (see Table 8) .

Table 8

Acquisition of Credentials Data

Benefits	important<------->		not important
1. I felt that all registered nurses should possess a degree in nursing.	30%	28%	43%
2. I felt pressure from the nursing associations to earn a degree.	32%	31%	36%
3. I felt pressure from the administrative body at my place of employment to earn a degree.	11%	22%	67%

In Table 9, responses to the belief that all R.N.'s should possess a nursing degree are crosstabulated with the year of graduation (from a diploma school of nursing) and children. It is interesting to note that the students who had graduated prior to 1970 were 15% more likely to agree with the statement than students who had graduated during the 1970s and 9% more likely than students who had graduated most recently, (i.e., 1980-1985). More pronounced are the differences in disagreement with the statement. The students who had graduated prior to 1970 were the least likely to disagree with the statement (17%), whereas students in the two other categories were 32% and 29% respectively more likely to disagree that an important motivation for them attending this program is a belief that all R.N.s should possess a degree in nursing. In other words, the students who had graduated prior to 1970 were the one's most likely to agree with the statement and the least likely to disagree with it. Students who did not have dependents were 23% more likely to disagree with this statement than those who had dependents. Since there are increased costs involved in attending university if one has dependents, those who disagree with the statement might not be enrolled in the program.

Table 9

Belief All R.N.s Should Possess a Degree By Year of Diploma Graduation and Dependents

		Year of Diploma Graduation			Dependents	
		1960-69	1970-79	1980-85	Yes	No
I felt that all registered nurses should possess a degree in nursing.	agree	39% (7)	24% (9)	30% (18)	32% (12)	28% (22)
	neither	44% (8)	27% (10)	24% (14)	40% (15)	22% (17)
	disagree	17% (3)	49% (18)	46% (27)	27% (10)	50% (39)
		n=114 p≤ .17			n=115 p≤ .04	

Pressure from either the associations or one's place of employment to 'get the degree' can actually be viewed as either a positive and/or a negative motivating factor. Relief of the pressure from working toward/receiving the degree can be perceived as a positive aspect. Alternatively, attending the program because of perceived coercion or force could be viewed negatively by the student. Pressure from the nursing associations was indicated as an important motivating factor by 32% of the respondents, whereas pressure from place of employment to earn the degree was indicated by only 11% of the respondents as an important reason for attending this program.

Compliance with authority. As discussed above, pressure can be viewed as both a positive and negative factor. Table 10 presents the frequencies of the statements in this category. Pressure from the associations was 20% more frequently indicated as an important motivating factor to attend the Post-R.N. program by the respondents than was pressure from one's place of employment. This is likely due to the fact that 73% of the sample population

were staff nurses, positions for which a degree may be encouraged, but is not generally required by an employer.

Table 10

Compliance With Authority Data

Benefits/Costs

	important		not important
1. I felt pressure from the nursing associations to earn a degree.	32%	31%	36%
2. I felt pressure from the administrative body at my place of employment to earn a degree.	11%	22%	67%

Personal well-being. Personal well-being is a broad category of costs and benefits, as indicated by the literature review, and the types of written comments by the respondents in this study. The frequencies of the perceived benefits of this category are presented in Table 11. Response to the statements regarding a greater sense of fulfillment, more self-esteem and more self-confidence had similar frequency distributions.

Table 11

Personal Well-Being Data: Benefits

Benefits	agree<----------->disagree		
1. I have a greater sense of fulfillment.	55%	30%	14%
2. I have more self-esteem.	49%	26%	25%
3. I have more self-confidence.	47%	29%	24%
4. I feel a sense of personal growth.	72%	20%	8%
5. I feel an excitement to learn	55%	26%	18%
6. I feel a sense of accomplishment through my school work.	64%	22%	14%
7. I am enjoying time away from my other responsibilities.	23%	37%	40%
8. I am enjoying the break from the routine of daily living.	26%	32%	42%
	important<-------> not important		
9. I felt the experience would give me personal satisfaction.	79%	16%	4%

Forty-nine percent (49%) of the sample agreed with the benefit of now having more self-esteem. It was also noted by one respondent in the open-ended section of the questionnaire, "I have a greater feeling of self-esteem and feel more positive about my future career," and by another, "I found out I am university material." Sekaran (1983) posits a likely association between feelings of self-esteem from activities outside the home and an overall satisfaction with life.

If attending the program positively influences self-esteem, then possibly the number of courses completed or, in other words, how far into the program a student is, may also influence this positive feeling. A crosstabulation of responses to this statement (increased self-esteem) with the number of courses that will be completed at the end of this term is presented in Table 12. While there is little difference in agreement with the statement between the categories of students, there is a marked difference in disagreement with the statement. Students who will have completed from 1 to 8 courses were19% more likely to disagree with the statement than those who had completed from 9 to 16 courses. Further, students who will have completed 9 to 16 courses were 14% more likely to disagree with this statement than students in the remaining third portion of the program. Therefore, the fewer the courses taken (in this study) the greater the likelihood of disagreeing that the program is fostering self-esteem. It appears, then, that the feeling of increased self-esteem is related to number of courses completed.

Table 12

Self-Esteem by Number of Courses Completed

		Number of Courses Completed		
		1-8	9-16	17-24
I have more self-esteem.	agree	50% (3)	45% (26)	53% (28)
	neither	–	24% (14)	30% (16)
	disagree	50% (3)	31% (18)	17% (9)

n=117
p ≤ .20

Borst and Walker (1986) found that an expected benefit from attending a post-R.N. program is the achievement of personal goals (both education and lifestyle), specifically self-esteem. Likewise, as Table 11 indicates, in this study the motivation of feeling that the experience (of attending the post-R.N. program) would give personal satisfaction was indicated as important by 79% of the sample.

Table 11 also reveals that a sense of personal growth was agreed to by 72% of the respondents. Themes of 'growth' were common in the literature review in relation to positive experiences of mature students in post-secondary education and the post-R.N. students in particular. Sewall (1984), in a study of motivations of adult undergraduate students, found that when the students were asked to choose the most important reason for continuing their education, 42% chose a personal growth goal as the primary reason, eg. simply to learn, to achieve independence and a sense of identity, and to gain the satisfaction of having a degree. Also, Lonberg (1984) identifies personal goal achievement as one motivating factor of R.N.s returning to school. Balough et al. (1980) summarize the experiences of 12 R.N. students who returned to school for their degree in nursing. One of the benefits experienced by these students was personal growth and change.

The literature on adult learners indicates that it is the older student who has been away from school for a long period of time who might perceive this sense of personal growth to a greater extent. A crosstabulation of responses to the statement "I feel a sense of personal growth" by the year of graduation from a diploma school of nursing and age of respondent, is presented in Table 13. Students who had graduated in the years 1960 through 1969, and the years 1970 through 1979 were 9% and 27% respectively more likely to agree with the statement than those who had more recently graduated in the years 1980

through 1985. However, there was only a slight indication (5%) that students in the older age range agree more often with the statement regarding personal growth. One of the respondents noted that, in relation to her and her family, "It has meant changes and adjustments. It has been a good learning experience." Another student commented that, "(I am) Becoming more open-minded because of content of non-nursing courses. Alternative viewpoints of different aspects of life are given." The frequencies of all respondents who agreed with this statement were high, as indicated in Table 13.

Table 13

Personal Growth by Year of Diploma Graduation and Age

		Year of Diploma Graduation			Age		
		1960-69	1970-79	1980-85	20-24	25-34	35+
I feel a sense of personal growth.	agree	72% (13)	90% (34)	63% (39)	71% (20)	71% (41)	76% (25)
	neither	17% (3)	8% (3)	29% (18)	29% (8)	21% (12)	12% (4)
	disagree	11% (2)	3% (1)	8% (5)	–	9% (5)	12% (4)
		n=118 p ≤ .06			n=119 p ≤ .26		

Since women may enter diploma nursing schools (or any post-secondary institution) at various ages, the variables of age and year of graduation cannot be used synonymously here. This is also apparent in Table 13, where there is not a significant percentage difference between age groups and agreement with the statement regarding personal growth, and yet there is a significant difference between the year of graduation from a diploma school of nursing and agreement with the statement. Therefore, the number of years away from

school seems to have more bearing on the feeling of personal growth from attending the program than does age alone.

Response to the statements regarding feeling a sense of accomplishment through school work and excitement to learn have similar frequencies (see Table 11). Chapman (1986) notes that the joy and excitement of learning, feelings of direction, accomplishment and the view of the university experience as expanding were some of the benefits identified by the mature aged undergraduate students in his study. Hart et al. (1985) also discuss a 'joy of learning' in relation to attending a post-R.N. degree program. In the present study, as Table 11 reveals, the benefit of feeling a sense of accomplishment was agreed to by 64% of the respondents and the statement on feeling an excitement to learn was agreed to by 55% of the respondents.

Table 14 presents the crosstabulation of responses to the statement on excitement to learn by marital status, age and year of graduation from diploma school of nursing. The data indicate that there is at least a 30% difference between the students in the 20-25 age group and the older age group, in that the older students were more likely to agree with the statement. The students who graduated in the years 1960 through 1969 and 1970 through 1979 were 16% and 10% respectively more likely to agree with the statement than students who graduated in the years 1980 through 1985. Also, the married and 'other' (divorced, separated, widowed and other) categories were 22% and 16% (respectively) more likely to agree with the statement than were the single students. Therefore, the students who were older, who had graduated before 1980, and who were married were more likely than the younger, single, and more recent graduates to agree with the statement on feeling an excitement to learn. This implies that the variables age, year of graduation and marital status affect these benefits experienced while attending university.

As with feelings of personal growth, the number of years since attending school might affect the 'newness' of attending such a program. Also, those students who are older and those who are married may also find that attending school stimulates an excitement to learn, especially if they have been away from school for a number of years.

Table 14

Excitement to Learn by Age, Year of Diploma Graduation and Marital Status

		Age			Year of Graduation			Marital Status		
		20-24	25-34	35+	1960-69	1970-79	1980-85	single	married	other
I feel an excitement to learn.	agree	32% (9)	62% (36)	64% (21)	61% (11)	71% (27)	45% (28)	45% (27)	67% (31)	61% (8)
	neither	46% (13)	17% (10)	24% (8)	28% (5)	18% (7)	29% (18)	32% (19)	20% (9)	23% (3)
	disagree	21% (6)	21% (12)	12% (4)	11% (2)	10% (4)	26% (16)	23% (14)	13% (6)	15% (2)
		n=119 p≤.03			n=118 p≤.11			n=119 p≤.24		

Some of the comments written by respondents were, "I absolutely love the learning", and "I have enjoyed the program immensely...my enthusiasm has effected a change in a few of my friends who are now also intending to take courses" and that the program had provided, "time to interact with scholarly people and time to discuss new issues." Another student noted the positive aspect of "entering an academic/research oriented environment."

Gove and Peterson (1980) suggest that some of the psychological reasons for women working outside the home may include the avoidance of the household role and as a means of escaping the pressures of motherhood, marriage, and family. In fact, one respondent in this study noted under additional benefits that, "My husband took over the caregiver role in the family

and the housekeeping role." However, the majority of students in this study may find that school, unlike work, has many added responsibilities of its own. The benefit of enjoying time away from other responsibilities was agreed to by only 23% of the respondents and disagreed to by 40% of the respondents. Table 15 presents a crosstabulation of responses to this statement by marital status and whether or not the student has dependents. Surprisingly, there are no significant differences between married, single, and other categories or between those students who have dependents and those who have not.

Table 15

Enjoying Time From Responsibilities by Marital Status and Dependents

		Marital Status			Dependents	
		single	married	other	yes	no
I am enjoying time away from my other responsi-bilities.	agree	24% (14)	18% (8)	36% (4)	28% (10)	20% (16)
	neither	32% (19)	49% (22)	18% (2)	31% (11)	40% (32)
	disagree	44% (26)	33% (15)	45% (5)	42% (15)	39% (31)
		n=115 p ≤ .25			n=115 p ≤ .52	

A similar benefit of enjoying the break from the routine of daily living was agreed to by only 26% of the sample and was disagreed to by 42%. This may be a benefit of employment that differs from attending school, since school tends to become an extended activity, with homework and possibly evening classes. Many students may not feel that they have any time away from responsibilities or that they are getting a break at all.

There are also many costs associated with the category of personal well-being. Table 16 presents the frequencies of the statements of perceived costs within this category.

Table 16

Personal Well-Being Data: Costs

Costs	agree<----------->disagree		
1. I feel depressed more frequently.	42%	31%	27%
2. I more often feel angry.	44%	26%	30%
3. I more often feel anxious.	68%	17%	14%
4. I worry about examinations and papers.	80%	14%	6%
5. I worry about my study habits.	44%	23%	32%
6. I feel a sense of internal turmoil regarding the transition from R.N. to B.Sc.N.	37%	22%	41%
7. I worry about finding caregivers for my children.	53%	18%	29%
8. I more often feel exhausted.	76%	15%	8%
9. I have a lot less leisure time.	85%	8%	6%
10. I feel I have 'role overload' ie. too little time for all my responsibilities.	81%	12%	8%
11. I feel that I am giving up more than I am receiving in return.	27%	36%	37%

The statements on feeling depressed more frequently and feeling angry more frequently have very similar frequency distributions, with agreement to the two statements by 42% and 44% of the respondents respectively.

Anxiety while attending a post-R.N. degree program was noted by Hart et al. (1985) and Sabina (1985). In this sample, 68% agreed that they more often feel anxious.

Worry over study habits was agreed to by 44% of the sample, and worry over examinations and papers by 80%. The (1983) University of Alberta Senate report was one source that noted that mature students, especially those who have been away from educational institutions for a length of time and/or have never been to a university, had concerns about examination and essay writing and their study habits. Jackson (1984) found that the academic demands are often a shock to the post-R.N. students and that some perceive low grades as a personal criticism. One student in this study, who had commented on the 'heaviness' of the coursework, also strongly agreed with the statement on more often feeling anxious. Another respondent noted that, "There is a strong feeling of competition among students rather than cooperation."

Table 17 presents the crosstabulation of responses to the statement "I worry about my study habits" by age of respondents and by the number of nursing courses completed. It is interesting to note that, in this study group, the students in the age 35 years and over were least likely to agree with the statement and more likely to disagree with it. More generally, the most mature students were least likely to be concerned with worrying over study habits, unlike the literature reviewed. Students who had completed 9 to 16 out of the 24 required number of courses were the most likely to agree, yet those who had completed 1 to 8 were the least likely to agree with the statement. It may be that

the students mid-way through the program are anticipating (from experience) the work and studying ahead.

Table 17

Worry Over Study Habits by Age and Number of Courses Completed

		Age			Number of Courses Completed		
		20-24	25-34	35+	1-8	9-16	17-24
I worry about my study habits.	agree	46% (13)	50% (29)	33% (11)	33% (2)	48% (28)	43% (23)
	neither	29% (8)	21% (12)	24% (8)	33% (2)	26% (15)	17% (9)
	disagree	25% (7)	29% (17)	42% (14)	33% (2)	26% (15)	40% (21)
		n=119 p ≤ .47			n=117 p ≤ .51		

Jackson (1984), Musio and Ohashi (1979) and Balough (1980) discuss the internal turmoil regarding the transition from R.N. to B.N. that might be experienced by this level of student. As Table 16 indicates, in this sample 37% did agree with the statement on such internal turmoil, but 63% either selected disagree or neither agree nor disagree.

The statement "I worry about finding caregivers for my children" was agreed to by 53% of the respondents to whom this statement was applicable (see Table 16). Michelson (1985) states that leaving children in the care of someone else was frequently reported as a negative aspect of working outside the home. Bassett (1985) also reports that the worry of finding a good caregiver is a serious one for working mothers.

Not surprisingly, the larger percentage of the students who agreed with the statement on worry about finding caregivers for their child(ren), have

preschool children. The respondents with preschool children, then, have more costs related to time away from their children (Table 7) and finding caregivers for them (Table 18). However, one student commented that at least by going to school and working "regular hours and not shiftwork" she/he was able to find good daycare. In relation to this particular 'cost' for this student then, employment was more 'costly' than attending university.

Table 18

Worry About Caregivers by Age of Children

		Age	
		preschool	schoolage
I worry about finding caregivers for my children.	agree	87% (7)	44% (11)
	neither	12% (1)	20% (5)
	disagree	-	36% (9)

n=33
$p \leq .11$

Three other costs in relation to personal well-being are those concerning exhaustion, less leisure time and feelings of role overload. All three had high percentages of agreement by respondents.

The statement, "I more often feel exhausted," was agreed to by 76% of the respondents (Table 16). Lieber (1980) noted expressions of overwhelmed and exhausted when employed women discussed work, spending time with family, household tasks, and time for themselves. Similarly, in the present study there were frequent comments by respondents regarding the 'heaviness' of the program. One student who strongly agreed with this statement, noted the program as being "very heavy...an endurance marathon."

"I have a lot less leisure time" was agreed to by 85% of the sample (Table 16). This cost was also noted in the literature reviewed in relation to working women (Couch, 1982; Statistics Canada, 1985; Lieber 1980) and mature post-secondary students (Richter and Witten, 1984). Students who attempt to continue to do all other household and outside activities that they had prior to attending school find that there is very little leisure time and, in particular, 'time for themselves.' This is, of course, especially true if the student also works while going to school. One student in this study commented that, "I have to work on call on weekends which means less time for leisure and significant others."

Table 19 presents the crosstabulation of the cost of less leisure time by age, number of dependents, and the extent of responsibility for the housework. The oldest students were 19% more likely to agree with this statement than the youngest students. Perhaps the 'older' respondents took more responsibilities upon themselves in relation to household tasks and extracurricular activities. Not unexpectedly, students with dependents were 13% more likely than those without dependents to indicate less leisure time. Moreover, students who took primary responsibility for housework were 14% more likely to indicate they had less leisure time than those who did not take the primary responsiblility for housework.

Table 19

Leisure Time by Age, Dependents and Housework

		Age			Dependents		Primary Responsibility For Housework	
		20-24	25-34	35+	yes	no	yes	no
I have a lot less leisure time.	agree	75% (21)	86% (49)	94% (30)	95% (35)	81% (65)	89% (79)	75% (21)
	neither	14% (4)	7% (4)	6% (2)	3% (1)	11% (9)	4% (4)	21% (6)
	disagree	11% (3)	7% (4)	-	3% (1)	7% (6)	7% (6)	4% (1)
		n=117 p≤.27			n=117 p≤.16		n=117 p≤.02	

Sekaran (1983) discusses the stress of multiple roles on working women due to the responsibilites of running a household when employed. Role conflicts are frequently noted in the literature as being associated with worry, pressure, tension, guilt, etc. There just does not seem to be enough time to engage in all the chosen activities. In the present study, the frequency of agreement to the cost of experiencing role overload did indicate differences between those who were married, single or other, those with dependents and the ages of the children. A high percentage (81%) of all respondents agreed with this statement. As Table 20 indicates, the youngest age group least often agreed (68%), and married students were somewhat more likely to agree with this statement than single students. Although respondents without children also had a high frequency of agreement, all those with preschool children agreed with the statement. One student noted the cost of attending the program meant, "Less time with my husband and he must take additional responsibility in home and with children." Another respondent noted, "I think having to work while

going through school and having family responsibilities is just spreading oneself too thinly."

Table 20

Role Overload by Age, Marital Status and Age of Children

		Age			Marital Status			Children		
		20-24	25-34	35+	single	married	other	none	preschool	school age
I feel I have 'role overload.'	agree	68% (19)	88% (51)	79% (26)	78% (47)	91% (42)	54% (7)	79% (67)	100% (8)	81% (21)
	neither	25% (7)	9% (5)	6% (2)	17% (10)	4% (2)	15% (2)	14% (12)	--	8% (2)
	disagree	7% (2)	3% (2)	15% (5)	5% (3)	4% (2)	31% (4)	7% (6)	--	11% (3)
		n=119 p≤.03			n=119 p≤.00			n=119 p≤.51		

Participants in Balough's study (1980) indicated one negative aspect of attending a post-R.N. program, was feeling that they were giving up more than they were receiving. This is very much related to a cost/benefit analysis. Although 27% of the students in this study agreed with the statement, 73% either disagreed or indicated neither agreement nor disagreement.

Social status. Increased social status was noted as a motivating factor for attending this program. Table 21 presents the data for this category. Jackson (1984) suggests that motivations for attending a post-R.N. degree program are to increase career status, and protect professional self-image. Relatedly, Bassett (1985) found that 'non-monetary' reasons such as feelings of dignity, respect and recognition motivate women maintaining careers. Fifty-one percent (51%) of this sample agreed that they felt more postive about the roles of the nurse since attending the program. The statements on receiving more recognition from others while attending the program and the motivating factor of

increased respect and prestige were agreed to by 38% and 37% (respectively) of the respondents.

Table 21

Social Status Data

Benefits

	agree<----------->disagree		
1. I feel more positive about the roles of the nurse.	51%	32%	17%
2. I receive more recognition from others.	38%	31%	31%
	important<-------->		not important
3. I felt I would receive increased respect and prestige.	37%	37%	25%

Financial aspects. Financial aspects of attending a university program were noted by many authors in the literature reviewed as being significant. Forty percent (40%) of this sample (see Table 22) felt the increased likelihood of financial rewards was an important motivating factor for attending this program. In other words, these nurses hoped that they would end up with a better paying job as a result of having a degree.

Table 22

Financial Data

Benefits

	important		not important
1. I felt there would be a greater likelihood of financial rewards.	40%	33%	26%

Costs

	agree		disagree
1. I feel the financial cost of attending university is great.	77%	15%	8%

Feeling that the financial cost of attending university is great, was agreed to by 77% of this sample. Chapman (1986) noted the mature aged students in his study experienced guilt related to not contributing to family income but spending money. Chapman also found that, regardless of the family's original financial situation, almost all of the families in his study attributed stress among family members to the expenses incurred by attending university. Table 23 is a crosstabulation of response to this statement by age of respondents to see if there was any significant differences. Students in the middle age range (25-34 years) had the highest tendency to agree with the statement; 86% of these students agreed that the financial cost of attending university is great.

Table 23

Financial Cost by Age

		Age		
		20-24	25-34	35+
I feel the financial cost of attending university is great.	agree	68% (19)	86% (50)	70% (23)
	neither	21% (6)	10% (6)	18% (6)
	disagree	11% (3)	3% (2)	12% (4)

n=119
$p \leq .23$

Many respondents in this study commented on the financial costs of their program. Some of these are: "(I was) unable to get a student loan for financial assistance...university costs are tremendous;" also, "It costs a lot of money e.g., books, xeroxing and parking are a killing;" and "In terms of actual monetary costs, I have had to set myself back a great deal with student loans, this worries me a great deal...it will take me years to pay them off and I hope that job satisfaction will outweigh this factor." Some students also commented specifically about the financial benefits they lost when they had to quit their job. One student noted the, "Loss of security in terms of pension plan, health plan, and dental plan."

Improved working conditions. The last category to be discussed is improved working conditions. Table 24 presents the data for these statements. These benefits are motivating factors for attending the program. Expanded opportunities for nursing positions and greater opportunities for advancement were important motivating factors for 94% and 95% (respectively) of this

sample. These are obviously significant benefits that are anticipated for these students.

Table 24

Improved Working Conditions Data

Benefits

	important<-------> not important		
1. I felt there would be expanded opportunities for nursing positions.	94%	5%	1%
2. I felt there would be greater opportunities for career advancement.	95%	5%	-
3. I felt there would be more opportunities to obtain a nursing position that does not involve shiftwork.	84%	11%	4%
4. I felt pressure from the administrative body at my place of employment to earn a degree.	11%	22%	67%

Another benefit in this category, obtaining a position without shiftwork, was indicated as an important motivating factor for 84% of the respondents. This is interesting in that it indicates that these nurses are hopeful of positions other than that of 'staff nurse' which likely involves shiftwork. A crosstabulation (Table 25) of responses to this statement by age indicates that students aged 20 to 24 and 25 to 35 were 9% and 13% respectively more likely to agree with this statement than students over the age of 35 years. Perhaps this is related to the data which indicate that the older students agree more frequently with the benefit of feeling an excitement to learn, in that the older students may have

been motivated more by the psychological benefits of attending this program than the career changes that might be expected.

Table 25

Not Wanting Shiftwork by Age

		Age		
		20-24	25-34	35+
I felt there would be more opportunities to obtain a nursing position that does not involve shiftwork.	important	85% (23)	89% (50)	76% (25)
	neither	11% (3)	7% (4)	18% (6)
	not important	4% (1)	4% (2)	6% (2)
	n=116 p ≤ .55			

Students who felt pressure from their place of employment to earn a degree likely would anticipate improved working conditions after receiving the degree. However, only 11% of the respondents indicated feeling such pressure.

Additional benefits and costs. Section 4 of the questionnaire asked students to list any significant benefits of returning to study (for them) that had not been listed previously, i.e., in any of the first three sections. Most of the respondents expanded upon some of the statements already within the questionnaire. One benefit identified by 9 students was the acquisition of a broader knowledge base, which can be considered under the category of professional knowledge. This was noted in relation to both the nursing and non-nursing courses taken toward the post-R.N. B.Sc.N. degree. Hillsmith (1978) likewise reports that "broader background" was checked by respondents

in her survey as a benefit of post-R.N. degree education. Three respondents discussed the opportunity to enter a Master's level program after receiving this degree. This benefit can be considered under the category of acquisition of credentials. Comments included, "Possession of an undergraduate degree will allow me to pursue higher education in a different field if I choose to do so" and also, "(I will be) able to apply to enter a Master's program." The benefit, "networking opportunites," was identified by two respondents and can be considered as a benefit under professional advancement. There were also some specific benefits listed that pertained only to that individual and were therefore included in a miscellaneous category. One example under the category of personal well-being is, "I am married to a professional man with a lot of education and I felt that I wanted equality."

Section 5 asked the students to list any significant costs of returning to study (for them) that had not been listed previously, i.e., in any of the first three sections. Again, most of the responses essentially expanded upon statements that had appeared in the earlier sections. Some other costs were listed, however. One was in relation to the organization and delivery of courses (17 respondents). These could be considered as negative aspects of professional knowledge. Some of the comments were, "Courses are not self-directed" and "I am very frustrated with the University of Alberta stanine system...inconsistancies are quite frequent." Health concerns (four respondents) were also discussed which could be considered negative aspects of personal well-being, and one respondent wrote about "health problems from stress related illness." Two respondents noted the loss of seniority at the full-time job they left to attend university, which can be viewed as a cost under professional advancement. Finally, two respondents noted personal well-being and social relation costs in

relation to attending the program resulting in a "barrier to marriage" and "delay of childbearing."

The program as profitable. The fourth research question is: Do these students view the program as (potentially) profitable? In Section 6 of the questionnaire, the students are asked to rate the cost/benefit weighting overall by the question: When considering the benefits (future and present) of attending this program, I feel that for me; the benefits outweigh the costs, the benefits equal the costs, or the costs outweigh the benefits? (See Table 26). Fifty-nine percent (59%) of the respondents indicated that the benefits outweigh the costs, 23% indicated that the benefits equal the costs, and 18% indicated that the costs outweigh the benefits.

Table 26

Overall Benefit/Cost Weighting Data

When considering the benefits (future and present) of attending this program, I feel that for me;

1. The benefits outweigh the costs.	59%
2. The benefits equal the costs.	23%
3. The costs outweigh the benefits.	18%

One of the costs under the category of personal well-being is the feeling of giving up more than receiving while attending this program. In Table 27, response to the overall benefit/cost rating is crosstabulated by the response to the statement on giving up more than receiving in return or, in other words, that the costs outweigh the benefits. If a student feels that more is being given up than is being received, the student likely also believes the costs outweigh the benefits. Although the numbers are not the same, students who agree that they

are giving up more than they are receiving are 34% more likely to agree that their costs outweigh their benefits than students who disagree with the statement. Students who disagree with the statement are 35% more likely to agree that the benefits outweigh the costs than the students who agree with the statement. Interestingly, of those students who neither agree or disagree with the statement, 63% believe the benefits outweigh the costs. Perhaps having to make a decision in the question format after reviewing all the costs and benefits statements in the first sections of the questionnaire encouraged them to think about their own situations.

Table 27

Cost/Benefit Weighting by Belief of Giving Up More Than Getting

		I feel that I am giving up more than I am receiving in return		
		agree	neither	disagree
When considering the benefits and costs of attending this program, I feel that for me the:	benefits outweigh costs	37% (12)	62% (26)	73% (32)
	benefits equal costs	22% (7)	26% (11)	20% (9)
	costs outweigh benefits	41% (13)	12% (5)	7% (3)

n=118
$p \leq .00$

Table 28 is a crosstabulation of the responses to the question on whether benefits outweigh, are outweighed by, or equal costs by marital status and number of dependents. As the data show, married students are 15% more likely than single students to indicate that the benefits outweigh the costs.

Table 28

Cost/Benefit Weighting by Marital Status and Number of Dependents

		Marital Status			Number of Dependents		
		single	married	other	1	2	3
When considering the benefits and costs of attending this program, I feel that for me the:	benefits outweigh costs	53% (31)	67% (31)	61% (8)	43% (6)	50% (8)	100% (7)
	costs outweigh benefits	24% (14)	9% (4)	23% (3)	29% (4)	19% (3)	-
	benefits equal costs	24% (14)	24% (11)	15% (2)	29% (4)	31% (5)	-
		n=118 $p \leq .30$			n=37 $p \leq .13$		

While 43% of those with one child and 50% of those with two children agree that the benefits outweigh the costs, 100% of those with three children believe this to be true. These results may be related to the possibility that even though the costs are high for students who are married and have children, they are willing to endure them because they anticipate greater rewards or benefits.

Summary

The students in this study have indicated many benefits and costs associated with attending this Post-R.N. degree program. The benefits and costs that were indicated by these respondents have been presented under the categories of professional advancement, professional knowledge, social relations, acquisition of credentials, compliance with authority, personal well-being, social status, financial aspects, and improved working conditions. Generally, the costs and benefits for the students in this sample were found to be similar to those identified in the literature pertaining to women employed outside the home, to mature students and specifically to students in other post-

R.N. educational programs. It seems that women who report high costs are more likely to report high benefits and this is likely the reason why they have stayed in the program. Although the personal cost at the time of attending university seems great, the benefits (short and long term) do or are anticipated to outweigh the costs.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this thesis the costs and benefits for registered nurses attending a nursing degree program have been examined. Choice and Exchange Theory has been used as a framework for examining the experiences of these students. The general principle of this theory is that humans participate in events that provide the most rewards and the least costs in order to maximize their profits. Costs may be voluntarily accepted when seeking rewards. Each person makes decisions based on her/his perception of these rewards and costs.

This theory has proven to be useful in organizing and examining the experiences of returning to school for post-R.N. students. Briefly, the assumptions of this theory in relation to the research problem are: that humans make choices that will bring the most profit; that people undergo costs to obtain rewards; that individuals vary in the value they place on experiences, etc., (but most will agree whether something is a reward or cost); and that other members of the group to which an individual belongs are considered when evaluating costs and rewards for themselves.

These assumptions formed the basis for the development of the research questions. These research questions will now be discussed in relation to the data obtained.

The first two research questions regarding the costs and benefits (rewards) for students in the Post-R.N. study group, and how these costs and benefits compare to those identified in other research will be discussed together. Generally, the costs and benefits for the students in the sample were similar to the costs and benefits found in the literature focussing on women

employed outside the home, mature students and students in various other post-R.N. programs.

However, not all of the costs and benefits identified in the literature were found in the present study. Those benefits that were not are: increasing one's level of clinical skills (only 18% agreed); and feeling pressure from the administrative body at one's place of employment to earn a degree (11% indicated this as an important motivating factor). The feeling of not learning anything new was a cost that was indicated by only 5%.

Some additional benefits and costs identified by the students in this study are not addressed in the literature reviewed. The additional benefits noted are; a broader knowledge base, the opportunity to use the degree to enter a Master's level program, networking opportunites and a number of benefits identified by only one respondent.

Additional costs indicated by the students that do not appear in the literature reviewed are; problems associated with the organization and delivery of the courses, health concerns and loss of seniority at a full-time job. On the whole, the literature reviewed provided quite an accurate inventory of most of the costs and benefits that might be encountered by this type of student.

The third research question was: Do certain demographic/personal characteristics (eg. age, marital status, home responsibilities) affect the identification of specific costs and benefits by these students? Statements from each of the first three sections of the questionnaire were crosstabulated with demographic and personal characteristics of the respondents. Where significant relationships occurred, the data were presented and discussed. As indicated in the literature and the theoretical framework utilized, a person's background and own personal home and family situation did affect how she/he perceived costs and benefits.

Generally, students who viewed costs as high also viewed benefits as high. Students in the age range 25 to 34 years were most likely to experience the costs of role overload, worry over study habits, have financial considerations, and less leisure time. They were also the most likely to feel an excitement to learn and indicate the desire for a job without shiftwork as an important motivation for entering the program.

Married students most often agreed that they had role overload and they were least likely to agree that they were enjoying time away from their other responsibilities. Yet, they were the most likely to note an excitement to learn and to feel that the benefits outweighed the costs. As posited by Choice and Exchange Theory, people are willing to endure costs to receive benefits and differ in the value they place on a reward or cost. It would appear that, for married students, the greater costs are endured for the greater benefits received/expected.

Other demographic and personal characteristics were found to affect the frequencies of agreement and disagreement to both the costs and benefits. However, some relationships between variables that were suggested in the literature are not apparent in these data. One example is the cost of feeling exhausted. Having dependents was noted in the literature reviewed as likely influencing this variable. In this study, however, having children did not make a notable difference; in fact the highest percentage of agreement (although slight) was from students without children.

Finally, the last research question asks: Do these students view the program as being (potentially) profitable? The data from this study indicate that 59% of the respondents agree that the benefits outweigh the costs, 18% agree that the costs outweigh the benefits, and 23% agree that the benefits equal the costs.

According to Choice and Exchange Theory, people only engage in activities that they perceive as being (potentially) profitable. Since 18% of the respondents believed the costs outweigh the benefits, this theory would lead to the conclusion that these students will either change their weighting of costs and benefits or will not be continuing in the program. However, the available data do not make it possible to ascertain which is most likely to happen.

There are a number of additional observations that were made about the data. The statements on benefits related to personal growth and satisfaction, fulfillment, self-esteem, sense of accomplishment, and an excitement to learn were agreed to by large numbers of the respondents. However, motivations such as expanded opportunities for nursing positions, greater opportunities for career advancements, and opportunities to obtain a position without shiftwork had even higher frequencies of agreement. The literature indicates that males primarily return to continue their education for reasons of career advancement, and females primarily for motives related to personal growth and satisfaction. Members of this sample however, have indicated stronger 'career' motivations than 'personal' motivations but they have in fact registered high levels of agreement on both types of motives.

The data on attending the post-R.N. program for personal motivations as opposed to career oriented motivations (for these respondents) were affected by year of graduation from the diploma school of nursing. Those who had more recently graduated cite reasons related to 'getting ahead' while those who had been away from school for a longer period of time more often point to the enjoyment of learning as a benefit. Alvarez (1985) noted that women who worked for financial reasons only incurred more of the costs of employment than those who worked for reasons of personal development. This may explain the slight tendency for younger students to express less pleasure with their studies.

The fact that these nurses see a career improvement as a motivation is interesting in that, as the year 2000 approaches, and the degree likely will be a requirement for new nurses, the degreed nurse will have no advantage over the other new nurses who will all have degrees. It may be that these nurses are considering their careers generally over the next few years and hope to be well established in 'better' positions by the year 2000.

As noted in Chapter Two, one of the purposes of this study was to achieve new insights into the experiences of post-R.N. baccalaureate nursing students, insights which might be useful to both potential students and nursing educators. In this respect, there are a number of the findings which could be highlighted , but three will be focussed on here.

In both the literature pertaining to employed women and to mature age university students, there is strong indication that these individuals are under extreme stress. This study strongly supports that observation. From 42% to 68% of the students reported that they feel more frequently depressed, angry, anxious and have various other kinds of worries. Eighty percent (80%) worry about exams and papers and express a feeling of role overload, and almost as many reported that they more often feel exhausted. There was a slight tendency for these expressions of stress to be noted by more women in the age group 25-34, by married women, and by women with young children. But what is perhaps most important is that all students in the sample tended to express this stress.

At the same time, there are a variety of indicators that the students are unable to maintain their personal support networks, the very networks which should assist them in coping with the stress associated with studying. They noted their inability to spend time with family, friends, and children, and sometimes an increase in stress because they feel they are unable to meet their

responsibilities or obligations to these same people. Although there is nothing in the literature which would suggest that these experiences are unique to nursing students, these findings raise questions about the demands of academic programs as they are currently structured. It may be that university programs, including nursing, are still structured in a way which assumes that young unmarried adult students are the norm. These data would suggest that, given the out-of-university responsibilities of the respondents, there is a need to modify their university programs of study.

There are also interesting and somewhat contradictory findings in relation to the younger adults in the program. Although they reported somewhat less "stress" or costs in this study, they were also less likely to indicate satisfaction with their studies. They were half as likely as older students to express feelings of excitement about learning (32% versus 64%), and they showed other signs of being somewhat alienated from their program of studies. There are sufficient differences between the different age groups to suggest that they should be treated as different categories of students. Further research should investigate reasons why the older and younger students experience the program of study quite differently.

Finally, simply from the perspective of the profession's desire to require a bachelor's degree in nursing for entry level certification, there are indications in these data that this goal is not a commonly-held one. Less than one third of the respondents agreed with the statement that "...all registered nurses should possess a degree in nursing," as a major motivating factor for attending university. This does not necessarily mean that the students who disagreed with this statement also disagree that all nurses should possess a degree (although this could, in fact be the case); but it does indicate that it was not a major motivating factor for them. Since career advancement constitutes a

strong motivation for many, it may be that they are hoping to gain advantage over the other R.N.s who currently have a diploma, and to secure a more highly valued nursing position before the year 2000.

Methodology

As discussed in Chapter One, there are limitations of this study. Although it is interesting to note general similarities between the costs and benefits in the literature and those agreed/disagreed to by the study population, there are many unidentified independent variables that could also be considered. This is especially so with respect to attitudes, which are not static qualities as are the demographic/personal characteristics. These include the general frame of mind the students are in the day they are answering the questionnaire, if they have just received a bad or good mark, if they are anxious about writing a test/exam, and so on. These questionnaires were completed by the students the week prior to the commencement of final examinations. This timing could influence the students in a number of ways including; higher stress levels because of exams and papers, feeling 'almost finished' and not wanting to put much effort into anything else, or feeling a sense of calmness and relief since the term is almost over. These could not realistically be accounted for, but should be considered nonetheless.

A specific aspect that was rather problematic to this study was the large number of dependent variables. In order to thoroughly analyze the effects of the independent variables on the dependent variables, all of these should be crosstabulated for comparison, contrast and discussion.. However, since the numbers were too great to include discussions of all crosstabulations, only selected tables were included.

Recommendations for Further Research

This research indicates areas for further study. Three that have been identified are:

First, a comparison study could be undertaken between a group of R.N.s enrolled in a degree program and a group of R.N.s who have decided not to enter such a program. In this way, Choice and Exchange Theory could be utilized to assess whether the nurses have entered or not entered such a program because of their perceptions of its rewards and costs. It would be interesting to obtain the ideas and opinions from nurses who have decided against entering a post-R.N. degree program as to their reasons for doing so.

Second, a research study to obtain the perceived costs and benefits experienced by R.N.s (similar to this thesis) could be undertaken, in which the data are collected in an interview setting on a smaller number of respondents, and selected by a probability sampling technique. In this way, students might be more open and honest and more actual insights into their experiences might be gained without the constraints of a printed questionnaire which may tend to 'lead' their responses.

Finally, it would be interesting and informative to conduct a study of post-R.N. students to determine their suggestions and ideas as to how to improve a Post-R.N. degree program to better suit their needs. In the open-ended sections of the research at hand, many of the respondents had various suggestions related to their own personal situations. It seems logical to allow these students to contribute based on their own experiences, to future programs that would make other such students' experiences more positive.

Conclusion

According to Hayes (1984), post R.N. nursing degree students have complex reasons for returning to school and "...often display hostility, frustration, and emotional crisis in attempting to cope with the education system" (p. 1). This study supports these findings. Overall, it also supports the position of Choice and Exchange Theory, in which students who perceive higher costs perceive higher rewards from their studies. The fact that Choice and Exchange Theory has been supported by this research, and that students do balance costs and benefits, implies that nursing and other university programs have an obligation to look at the very high costs of studying which many of their students incur. Ways of meeting the goals of these educational programs that are less costly to these students could then be considered.

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APPENDIX 1

Dear Student;

I am a student in the Master of Education program at the University of Alberta. I am collecting data for my thesis in which I am examining the costs and benefits of attending a post-R.N. degree program as perceived by the students. My study group is the students in the Post-R.N. B.Sc.N program at the University of Alberta.

I would very much appreciate your taking the time to answer the questionnaire as it relates to your experience of attending this program. I hope that the data will be useful in providing some insight into the motivations, anticipated benefits, and problems of the post-R.N. student.

You are not obligated to complete the questionnaire, and participation is not related to your course work in any way. All returned questionnaires are confidential, so names are not requested. Since there is anonymity of responses, no questionnaires can be returned, but you are free to withdraw from participating at any time until the questionnaire is handed in.

The findings will be written up in such a way so that no student can be identified. Along with the analysis and recommendations, they will be available for your purusal, as a copy of the completed thesis will be placed in the Education Library.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated. Thanks a lot!

Christine Ateah

POST-R.N. STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Benefits (positive aspects) and costs (negative aspects) of attending university can be considered in terms of; feelings and thoughts associated with the experience, social aspects, relationships, and motivations.

I. Below are listed expressions of feelings and thoughts that may apply to you since returning to study in this program. Please circle the response which most accurately represents your feeling.

	strongly agree<----------> strongly disagree				
1. I have a greater sense of fulfillment.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I have more self-esteem.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I receive more recognition from others.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I feel depressed more frequently.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I worry about examinations and papers.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I don't feel I am learning anything new.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I worry about my study habits.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I feel more positive about the roles of the nurse.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I feel an excitement to learn.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I feel I have 'role overload' i.e., too little time for all my responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I feel a sense of accomplishment through my school work.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I feel the financial cost of attending university is great.	1	2	3	4	5

	strongly agree				strongly disagree
13. I feel a sense of personal growth.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I feel a sense of professional growth.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I feel a sense of internal turmoil regarding the transition from R.N. to B.Sc.N.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I am increasing my knowledge of nursing theory.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I am increasing my level of clinical skills.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I feel that I am giving up more than I am receiving in return.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I have more self-confidence.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I more often feel exhausted.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I more often feel angry.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I am further developing my communication skills.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I more often feel anxious.	1	2	3	4	5

Please circle (by number) the 3 statements above that apply the most to yourself.

2. Below are listed social/family aspects that may apply to you since returning to study in this program. Please circle the response which most accurately represents how you feel about each statement (Please note the varied positions of 'strongly disagree' and 'strongly agree' on the scale from question 1.)
N/A = not applicable

		strongly disagree				strongly agree
1. I am experiencing increased social contact.		1	2	3	4	5
2. I spend too much time away from my children.	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
3. I worry about finding caregivers for my children.	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
4. I am enjoying getting to know other students.		1	2	3	4	5
5. I spend too much time away from family and friends.		1	2	3	4	5
6. I am enjoying time away from my other responsibilities.		1	2	3	4	5
7. I have a lot less leisure time.		1	2	3	4	5
8. I am enjoying the break from the routine of daily living.		1	2	3	4	5

Please circle (by number) the 3 statements above that apply the most to yourself.

3. Below are listed some reasons people have given for returning to school. Please circle the response which most accurately respresents the importance of each statement to you personally.

	extremely Important				not at all Important
	|	|	|	|	|
1. I felt there would be expanded opportunities for nursing positions.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I felt pressure from the nursing associations to earn a degree.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I felt there would be greater opportunities for career advancement.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I felt there would be greater likelihood of financial rewards.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I felt there would be more opportunities to obtain a nursing position that does not involve shiftwork.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I felt I would receive increased respect and prestige.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I felt I would develop increased confidence in my overall nursing ability.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I felt I would develop more competence in my nursing skills.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I felt the experience would give me personal satisfaction.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I felt pressure from the administrative body at my place of employment to earn a degree.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I felt that all registered nurses should possess a degree in nursing.	1	2	3	4	5

Please circle (by number) the 3 statements above that apply the most to yourself.

4. Please list any significant benefits (positive aspects) of your return to study that were not listed under questions 1,2,and 3, i.e., in any category.

_____

_____

_____

5. Please list any significant costs (negative aspects) of your return to study that were not listed under questions 1,2,and 3, i.e., in any category.

_____

_____

_____

6. When considering the benefits (future and present) of attending this program, I feel that for me;
(Please circle the number beside the appropriate statement.)

The benefits outweigh the costs.	1
The costs outweigh the benefits.	2
The benefits equal the costs.	3

7. Please circle the number beside the characteristic(s) listed that pertain to you.

1.	gender:	female 1	male 2
2.	age:	less than 20 yrs.	1
		20-24 yrs.	2
		25-29 yrs.	3
		30-34 yrs.	4
		35-39 yrs.	5
		over 40 yrs.	6
3.	marital status:	single	1
		married	2
		divorced	3
		separated	4
		widowed	5
		other	6
4.	Do you have dependents?	Yes	1
		No	2

5. **If yes,** how many? _____

6. **If yes,** are the dependents;

elderly	1
children	2
other	3

7. **If you have children,** are they;

less than 1 yr.	1
1 - 5 yrs.	2
6 - 10 yrs.	3
11-15 yrs.	4
over 15 yrs.	5

8. Do you take primary responsibility for the housework at home?

Yes	1
No	2

9. Are you an active member of a community organization?

Yes	1
No	2

10. Do you participate in regular sports/hobbies (extracurricular activities)?

Yes	1
No	2

11. What year did you graduate with your diploma in nursing? _____

12. Have you taken any other post-secondary courses since you completed your diploma in nursing? (other than those used for this program)

Yes	1
No	2

If yes, please specify_____

13. How many years have you worked as a R.N.? full-time _____
part-time_____

14. Which title describes your last nursing position?

staff nurse	1	
head nurse	2	
assistant head nurse	3	
team leader	4	
other	5	please specify _____

15. What was your employment status the year prior to entering this program?

full-time R.N.	1	
part-time R.N.	2	
homemaker	3	
other	4	please specify _____

16. What is your student status?

full-time (3 or more courses)	1
part-time (less than 3 courses)	2

17. What year did you enroll in this program? _____

18. Have you taken any courses through Athabasca University?

Yes	1
No	2

19. **If yes,** how many? _____

20. At the end of this term, how many courses will you have completed toward your B.Sc.N.?_____

21. What is your primary financial source(s) while attending university?

spouse or family	1	
own savings	2	
scholarship/bursary	3	
loan	4	
full-time work	5	
part-time work	6	
other	7	please specify _____

Please add any additional comments on your situation in relation to attending this program that you wish to make, or comments about this questionnaire.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thanks again for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

APPENDIX 2

DATA OBTAINED FROM POST-R.N. STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Data are presented as a percentage of the respondents who answered each question (unless otherwise indicated).

I. Below are listed expressions of feelings and thoughts that may apply to you since returning to study in this program. Please circle the response which most accurately represents your feeling.

	strongly agree				strongly disagree
1. I have a greater sense of fulfillment.	14	41	30	12	2
2. I have more self-esteem.	11	38	26	18	7
3. I receive more recognition from others.	6	32	31	27	4
4. I feel depressed more frequently.	12	30	31	19	8
5. I worry about examinations and papers.	38	42	14	4	2
6. I don't feel I am learning anything new.	-	5	23	36	35
7. I worry about my study habits.	17	28	23	26	6
8. I feel more positive about the roles of the nurse.	12	39	32	13	4
9. I feel an excitement to learn.	19	36	26	14	4
10. I feel I have 'role overload' i.e., too little time for all my responsibilities.	51	29	12	4	3
11. I feel a sense of accomplishment through my school work.	18	46	22	12	2
12. I feel the financial cost of attending university is great.	50	27	15	4	3

	strongly agree				strongly disagree
13. I feel a sense of personal growth.	30	42	20	5	2
14. I feel a sense of professional growth.	29	40	21	8	2
15. I feel a sense of internal turmoil regarding the transition from R.N. to B.Sc.N.	14	24	22	25	16
16. I am increasing my knowledge of nursing theory.	14	57	21	7	1
17. I am increasing my level of clinical skills.	1	17	34	27	22
18. I feel that I am giving up more than I am receiving in return.	8	19	36	28	9
19. I have more self-confidence.	7	40	29	18	7
20. I more often feel exhausted.	35	41	15	4	4
21. I more often feel angry.	18	25	26	22	8
22. I am further developing my communication skills.	18	50	22	6	3
23. I more often feel anxious.	29	39	18	11	3

Please circle (by number) the 3 statements above that apply the most to yourself.

positive		negative	
	#13 (35%)		#20 (33%)
	#14 (26%)		#23 (18%)
	#22 (18%)		#10 (14%)

2. Below are listed social/family aspects that may apply to you <u>since returning to study in this program.</u> Please circle the response which most accurately represents how you feel about each statement (Please note the varied positions of 'strongly disagree' and 'strongly agree' on the scale from question 1.)
N/A = not applicable

	strongly disagree<---------->strongly agree				
1. I am experiencing increased social contact.	22	19	25	26	8
2. I spend too much time away from my children. N/A (71)	3	3	12	21	62
3. I worry about finding caregivers for my children. N/A (71)	29	-	18	32	21
4. I am enjoying getting to know other students.	1	7	20	40	32
5. I spend too much time away from family and friends.	3	7	21	40	29
6. I am enjoying time away from my other responsibilities.	19	21	37	13	10
7. I have a lot less leisure time.	3	3	8	20	65
8. I am enjoying the break from the routine of daily living.	20	21	32	18	8

Please circle (by number) the 3 statements above that apply the <u>most</u> to yourself.

positive		negative	
	#4 (38%)		#7 (60%)
	#1 (31%)		#5 (48%)
	#6 (19%)		#2 (18%)

3. Below are listed some reasons people have given for returning to school. Please circle the response which most accurately respresents the importance of each statement to you personally.

	extremely important				not at all important
	|	|	|	|	|
1. I felt there would be expanded opportunities for nursing positions.	51	43	5	1	-
2. I felt pressure from the nursing associations to earn a degree.	7	25	31	18	18
3. I felt there would be greater opportunities for career advancement.	53	41	5	-	-
4. I felt there would be greater likelihood of financial rewards.	16	24	33	19	8
5. I felt there would be more opportunities to obtain a nursing position that does not involve shiftwork.	53	32	11	3	1
6. I felt I would receive increased respect and prestige.	10	27	37	16	10
7. I felt I would develop increased confidence in my overall nursing ability.	20	36	25	11	8
8. I felt I would develop more competence in my nursing skills.	9	33	32	15	10
9. I felt the experience would give me personal satisfaction.	35	44	16	3	2
10. I felt pressure from the administrative body at my place of employment to earn a degree.	5	6	22	22	45
11. I felt that all registered nurses should possess a degree in nursing.	9	21	28	21	22

Please circle (by number) the 3 statements above that apply the most to yourself.

#1 (50%)
#3 (48%)
#9 (38%)

4. Please list any significant benefits (positive aspects) of your return to study that were not listed under questions 1,2,and 3, i.e., in any category.

broader knowledge base (9 responses)
opportunity to enter a Master's program (3 responses)
networking (2 responses)
miscellaneous (8 responses)

5. Please list any significant costs (negative aspects) of your return to study that were not listed under questions 1,2,and 3, i.e., in any category.

organization and delivery of courses (17 responses)
health concerns (4 responses)
loss of seniority (2 responses)
personal (2 responses)
miscellaneous (12 responses)

6. When considering the benefits (future and present) of attending this program, I feel that for me;
(Please circle the number beside the appropriate statement.)

The benefits outweigh the costs.	**59**
The costs outweigh the benefits.	**18**
The benefits equal the costs.	**23**

7. Please circle the number beside the characteristic(s) listed that pertain to you.

1.	gender:	female **99**	male **1**
2.	age:	less than 20 yrs.	-
		20-24 yrs.	**23**
		25-29 yrs.	**28**
		30-34 yrs.	**21**
		35-39 yrs.	**16**
		over 40 yrs.	**12**
3.	marital status:	single	**50**
		married	**39**
		divorced	**7**
		separated	**2**
		widowed	**1**
		other	**1**
4.	Do you have dependents?	Yes	**31**
		No	**69**

5. **If yes,** how many?

1 - 38	
2 - 43	
3 - 19	
(N/A - 70)	

6. **If yes,** are the dependents;

elderly	**5**
children	**89**
other	**5**

7. **If you have children,** are they;

less than 1 yr.	**-**
1 - 5 yrs.	**8 (responses)**
6 - 10 yrs.	**15 (responses)**
11-15 yrs.	**13 (responses)**
over 15 yrs.	**5 (responses)**

8. Do you take primary responsibility for the housework at home?

Yes	**76**
No	**23**

9. Are you an active member of a community organization?

Yes	**25**
No	**75**

10. Do you participate in regular sports/hobbies (extracurricular activities)?

Yes	**44**
No	**55**

11. What year did you graduate with your diploma in nursing?

1960 - 1969	**15**
1970 - 1979	**32**
1980 - 1985	**52**

12. Have you taken any other post-secondary courses since you completed your diploma in nursing? (other than those used for this program)

Yes	**36**
No	**64**

If yes, please specify

university	**40**
clinical specialty	**50**
workshop	**9**
other	**45**

13. How many years have you worked as a R.N.?

full-time	0 yrs.	7
	1 - 4 yrs.	54
	5 - 10 yrs.	24
	11 - 20 yrs.	15
part-time	0 yrs.	48
	1 - 4 yrs.	42
	5 - 10 yrs.	5
	11 - 20 yrs.	5

14. Which title describes your last nursing position?

staff nurse	73
head nurse	5
assistant head nurse	3
team leader	2
other	17

15. What was your employment status the year prior to entering this program?

full-time R.N.	70
part-time R.N.	24
homemaker	-
other	5

16. What is your student status?

full-time (3 or more courses)	95
part-time (less than 3 courses)	5

17. What year did you enroll in this program?

1978 - 1985	37
1986 -	63

18. Have you taken any courses through Athabasca University?

Yes	55
No	45

19. **If yes,** how many?

1	47
2	38
3	15

20. At the end of this term, how many courses will you have completed toward your B.Sc.N.?

1 - 8	5
9 - 16	49
17 - 24	45

21. What is your primary financial source(s) while attending university?

spouse or family	30
own savings	51
scholarship/bursary	9
loan	21
full-time work	3
part-time work	42
other	1